

1AC – Modular

1AC – Default

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

The United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Sea, or UNCLOS, is an international treaty signed regulating critical maritime security operations. Roncevert **Almond**, advisor to the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, explains last year that the treaty could form the bedrock of a new international order, and that by joining, the US could exercise leadership in the institutional development of maritime policy and lock in a resilient international system favorable to US interests.

Thus, our sole contention is international influence.

In particular, acceding to UNCLOS will give the US influence in 2 critical regions.

First, the South China Sea. In the status quo, China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Taiwan, and many more countries have made conflicting territorial claims in the region. Bill **Hayton** at the Royal Institute for International Affairs explains in July that the Hague Tribunal recently ruled that China's territorial claims in the region contradict UNCLOS, but that China has ignored the ruling, using its military and economic strength to pressure regional actors, including key US allies, into granting China sovereignty over critical resources in the area. Douglas **Gates** of the Diplomat in 2017 finds that despite aggression from China in the South China Sea and the seizure of US military vessels stationed there to protect our allies, the United States has not joined UNCLOS and thus doesn't have access to its binding dispute resolution panels. Fortunately, as Will **Rogers** at the Center for a New American Security explains in 2012, US ratification of UNCLOS would give it critical legitimacy in its efforts to mediate territorial disputes in the region by working within the existing international framework. If the US accedes, it has a formal mechanism to file complaints against China, mitigating the risk of conflict. Unfortunately, without such credibility, the US will be unable to pursue a diplomatic approach and will be forced to adopt a more aggressive strategy regional conflict is inevitable. Lily **Kuo** at Defense One confirms in 2016 that the overlapping territorial claims in the South China Sea combined with the growing dominance of hardliners in the Chinese government, an increased US-China rivalry, and mutual distrust between all involved parties would make a militaristic escalation in the region inevitable absent dispute resolution.

Second, the Arctic. Mate **Aerandir** at the Naval Postgraduate School explains in 2012 that Russia's economy relies on its oil-rich territorial claims in the arctic, but that those claims are disputed by the US, Canada, and other US allies in the region. He continues that without a peaceful resolution, the uncertainty in the region would force countries to build up their military presence to secure their claims, meaning a small accident could quickly escalate into a military conflict between the US and Russia. However, as Rob **Heubert** at the University of Calgary explains in 2008, UNCLOS is explicitly built to clarify these territorial disputes, and US involvement in those negotiations would ensure a peaceful resolution favorable to our allies by bringing everyone involved to the table.

Ultimately, the transition to a multilateral world order is inevitable. By ensuring a peaceful transition favorable to US interests, Stephen **Brooks** at Dartmouth writes in 2013 that a global alliance system would provide the political framework and communication channels to push for cooperation on transnational issues like terrorism and climate change. Therefore, Beth **Simmons** at Harvard finds in 2010 based on an empirical study of 148 international conflicts that commitment to multilateral institutions and treaties such as UNCLOS creates a more durable peace by signaling peaceful intentions, reducing the risk of misunderstandings, and creating an international framework for cooperation.

SCS – Short

Bill **Hayton** at the Royal Institute for International Affairs explains in July that the Hague Tribunal recently ruled that China's territorial claims in the region violate UNCLOS, but that China has ignored the ruling, using its military and economic strength to pressure regional actors into granting China sovereignty over critical resources in the area. Fortunately, as Will **Rogers** at the Center for a New American Security explains in 2012, US ratification of UNCLOS would give it critical legitimacy in its efforts to mediate territorial disputes in the region. Unfortunately, without such credibility, the US will be unable to pursue a diplomatic approach and will be forced to adopt a more aggressive strategy regional conflict is inevitable. Lily **Kuo** at Defense One confirms in 2016 that the overlapping territorial claims in the South China Sea combined with the growing dominance of hardliners in the Chinese government, an increased US-China rivalry, and mutual distrust between all involved parties would make a militaristic escalation in the region inevitable.

SCS – Medium

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SCS – Long

First, the South China Sea. In the status quo, China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Taiwan, and many more countries have made conflicting territorial claims in the region. Bill **Hayton** at the Royal Institute for International Affairs explains in July that the Hague Tribunal recently ruled that China's territorial claims in the region contradict UNCLOS, but that China has ignored the ruling, using its military and economic strength to pressure regional actors, including key US allies, into granting China sovereignty over critical resources in the area. Douglas **Gates** of the Diplomat in 2017 finds that despite aggression from China in the South China Sea and the seizure of US military vessels stationed there to protect our allies, the United States has not joined UNCLOS and thus doesn't have access to its binding dispute resolution panels. In fact, Erick **Slavin** from Stars and Stripes Magazine reports in 2015 that China actually wants the US to ratify the convention, with Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu **Kang** accusing the US of hypocrisy and encouraging Washington to abide by the convention and international law. Fortunately, as Will **Rogers** at the Center for a New American Security explains in 2012, US ratification of UNCLOS would give it critical legitimacy in its efforts to mediate territorial disputes in the region by working within the existing international framework. If the US accedes, it has a formal mechanism to file complaints against China, mitigating the risk of conflict. Unfortunately, without such credibility, the US will be unable to pursue a diplomatic approach and will be forced to adopt a more aggressive strategy regional conflict is inevitable. Lily **Kuo** at Defense One confirms in 2016 that the overlapping territorial claims in the South China Sea combined with the growing dominance of hardliners in the Chinese government, an increased US-China rivalry, and mutual distrust between all involved parties would make a militaristic escalation in the region inevitable absent dispute resolution.

Arctic

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Hormuz

First, the Strait of Hormuz. Ted **Regencia** at al Jazeera writes in July that Iran has responded to a new round of sanctions by threatening to close the Strait of Hormuz, a critical shipping route carrying 30% of global natural gas. Fortunately, as Rogers explains, UNCLOS contains provisions guaranteeing freedom of navigation through critical routes like the Strait of Hormuz. Therefore, ratifying the convention would enable US companies to remain competitive, keeping oil prices down and preventing massive economic shocks. Unfortunately, David **Kreutzer** at the Heritage Foundation finds in 2012 that even the threat of closing the strait would cause oil price spikes, and that an actual closure would over double the price. Even a week-long disruption would cause lasting economic effects as gas and energy prices skyrocketed, causing massive layoffs, falling profit margins, less economic risk-taking, and declining household incomes.

Horn of Africa

First, the Horn of Africa.

Piracy around the Horn of Africa has dramatically increased in the past ten years. Jason **Patinkin** from Foreign Policy finds in 2017 that piracy had been all but stopped due to an international coalition in the late 2000s, but rising geopolitical tensions elsewhere ruined that cooperation, leading to a massive rebound of regional piracy. Fortunately, CFR fellow Scott **Borgerson** writes in 2012 that the international cooperation resulting from the treaty ratification would allow the US to share the burden of policing piracy, making efforts far more effective through the creation of international flotillas and allowing the US to arrest pirates without violating on another country's sovereignty. In fact, Rogers from earlier continues that existing international agreements pertaining to piracy do not account for advances in technology. As the threat from pirates becomes increasingly multifaceted, Rogers finds that in order for the US to use necessary technologies such as drones and other surveillance vehicles, it will need to advocate for such technologies in future UNCLOS renegotiations.

Ending Thing

Ultimately, the transition to a multilateral world order is inevitable. By ensuring a peaceful transition favorable to US interests, Stephen **Brooks** at Dartmouth writes in 2013 that a global alliance system would provide the political framework and communication channels to push for cooperation on transnational issues like terrorism and climate change. Therefore, Beth **Simmons** at Harvard finds in 2010 based on an empirical study of 148 international conflicts that commitment to multilateral institutions and treaties such as UNCLOS creates a more durable peace by signaling peaceful intentions, reducing the risk of misunderstandings, and creating an international framework for cooperation.

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