

Security Council (SC)

*Addressing
Escalating Tensions:
Territorial Disputes
and Regional Stability
in the South China
Sea*



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I. INTRODUCTION

The Security Council is one of the six main organs of the United Nations, founded on October 24th, 1945 in London. Since then, it has taken permanent residency at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City (*United Nations Security Council*, n.d.). The aim of this committee is to ensure the peace and well being of the international community and the maintenance of security by acting against possible threats or acts of aggression towards world stability (*United Nations Security Council* , n.d.). The Security Council mainly addresses viable solutions that will guarantee safety from belic conflicts, natural disasters, armed propaganda... conducts diplomatic initiatives to protect and shelter civilians, prevention of international disputes, strengthen security and support other nations leadership (United Nations, n.d.). This committee's restrictions include the hazards of undeveloped funding, unforeseeable diseases, military conflicts, revolts, human rights violations, environmental destruction, and organized crime. Another limitation that the Security Council faces is the lack of representations of various regions of the world, with just 15 countries helping with respresentation.

The committee includes 15 members, 5 permanent, that represent developed nations, this being; People's Republic of China, the French Republic, the Russian Federation, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America (*United Nations Security Council*, n.d.). The 10 non-permanent nations are chosen depending on the issue addressed and the nations affected (Amt, n.d.). This committee seeks to accomplish its objective as a result of developing peacekeeping ideas and deployments, as well as the support of discussions regarding the measures that must be taken in order to ensure stability and order in the international community (*What Is the Security Council?*, n.d.).

The United Nations Security Council holds the authority to take action and make decisions that member nations must follow in order to secure peace, this body has the power to establish norms as well as implement measures if tensions between countries escalate (*What Is the Security Council?*, n.d.). In addition the committee has taken action in peacekeeping missions, humanitarian crises, established counter terrorism reforms... It has authorized military actions, imposed sanctions, passed resolutions, and addressed global health threats (*Resolutions Adopted by the Security Council in 2024*, n.d.).

Furthermore, developed from past antagonizations between competing claimant

countries in the South China Sea, proclaiming sovereignty over the sea due to its richness in natural resources, countries such as People's Republic of China (and Taiwan), Negara Brunei Darussalam, The Republic of Indonesia, The Federation of Malaysia, Republic of the Philippines and The Socialist Republic of Vietnam have had territorial disputes since the early 1970's timeframe, due to the claiming of various islands, zones and fishing areas (*Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea*, n.d.). Chinese and Southeast Asian leaders have failed to resolve these disputes diplomatically. This undermining has led to increasing tensions that could threaten the regional stability. In recent years, The Republic of China has increased its efforts to reclaim land, by physically creating new land (Piling sand on existing reefs, making ports, military installations and airstrips). The ongoing conflict has started to escalate until 2024, threatening the peace that ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries hold (*US-China Relation*, n.d.).

This is a highly relevant topic as its revolutionary cause can have a profound impact on the world's peace and stability as it involves major powers with high influences. The powers involved in this dispute are People's Republic of China, who has the majority of the South China Sea and claims to have historical rights; The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, who as the Republic of China, claims to have the same interest; The Federation of Malaysia, who owns parts of the southern Spratly Islands; Brunei Darussalam, claims an exclusive economic zone which directly overlaps with the Spratly Islands, last but not least, the United States of America, they are not directly affected but have a strategic interest which includes the freedom of navigation. (United States Department of State, 2020). As mentioned earlier, some tension has been noticeable since 1970' but it has been increasing greatly since 2024.

It addresses significant territorial disputes that are greatly open for debate as it is geopolitically significant and has very diverse interests from different parties, as it is a crucial shipping route, it has a very wide economical impact. Through the overlapping territorial claims, there is dispute over the legal issues and how it affects international law and their enforcement and lastly, environmental concerns, which nowadays is a very vital limitation to take into consideration in order to protect marine life and the biodiversity. All of these issues have implications and can have a controversial approach to world stability.

II. HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

The territorial disputes regarding the South China Sea have roots in former tensions

framed centuries ago due to the historical claiming of islands by People's Republic of China, The Socialist Republic of Vietnam and other regional powers because of their vicinity, explorations and historical records (*Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea*, n.d.). All of this past tensions as a whole, resulted in laying the groundwork for future disputes surrounding the sea and its resources.

The main reasons for this escalating tensions lay on the competitions of territorial claims; multiple countries have opposing claims to the islands and natural assets on the South China Sea, triggering conflict and a lack of agreement about maritime boundaries (BBC News, 2023). Another sparking cause to this rising unease is the growth of People's Republic of China; The People's Republic of China's increasing economic and military dominance strengthens its confrontational behavior in the region (Mastro, 2020). Economic interests are potentially one of the most provoking reasons to the dispute; Oil and gas resources as well as the strategic control over critical shipping lanes, stimulates rivalry amongst claimant nations (Cohn, 2024). Lastly, legal disputes, historically and present, have a hold on the rising tensions; Different interpretations of the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) result in legal ambiguities that impede territorial claim resolutions (Cohn, 2024).

1. 20th CENTURY

The European invasion in the early 1900's marked the start of a series of conflicts regarding the South China Sea. European colonial powers, such as the French Republic, Kingdom of the Netherlands, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the Kingdom of Spain entered the scene in consequence of trading posts, mainland dominance in regional trade routes (Xu, 2020). Therefore, the French Republic, the most influential power to this conflict, established control over certain territories in the sea, for example; the French Republic colonized certain areas of what is today's The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, including the Paracel and Spratly islands. This brought a new aspect of obstacles to the panorama (Hayton, 2023).

During World War II, in 1937, Japan invaded the South China Sea islands after claiming exclusive rights over the Paracel and Spratly islands. Japan's military attempt into the South China Sea, disrupted the region's existing power dynamics. After Japan's defeat, the status of the claimant islands remained unresolved and unclear (Xu, 2020).

In the aftermath of World War II, in 1947, the Republic of China (present day Taiwan)

declared sovereignty to a broad maritime zone which occupied the majority of the South China Sea (Xu, 2020). This controversial claim, denoted as the “Eleven-Dash-Line” was built upon an assortment of historical sources and records including the different variations of Chinese maps (Geostrata, 2024). The line significantly increased the People’s Republic of China’s territorial extent over the sea, provoking protests from neighboring countries.

In 1949, after the Chinese Civil Conflict, the People's Republic of China inherited the claims on the sea that the Republic of China had made formerly. These inherited claims fueled tensions in the sea because of the continuity and the controversy of all the claims previously held by the ROC (Republic of China), including the “Eleven-Dash-Line” (Global Taiwan Institute, 2022). This line, which encompassed the majority of the South China Sea, considerably increased the People’s Republic of China’s maritime reach while contradicting and neglecting the territorial sovereignty of numerous Southeast Asian governments (Global Taiwan Institute, 2022). The assertive actions that People’s Republic of China took towards the issue were more approachable than the People’s Republic of China’s attempts. Military troops were sent to occupy several of the islands under dispute, reinforcing their presence while challenging other countries' claims (Xu, 2020). Later, the PRC (People’s Republic of China) developed the strategy of the “Island Chain” as a policy, discerning the South China Sea groups as a defensive barrier. This strategy further emphasized the People’s Republic of China’s strategic interest in controlling the region (VornDick, 2018). Therefore, the People's Republic of China's inheritance of claims and demanding actions were met with strong opposition from Southeast Asian countries. These nations felt their territorial claims on sovereignty over the sea being disregarded, this leading to increasing tension (VornDick, 2018).

The People's Republic of China inherited claims from the Republic of China, particularly the “Eleven-Dash-Line” continue to be a source of contention in the South China Sea. It emphasizes the complex historical, legal and strategic components of the region's territorial disputes, such as the lack of clarity towards the “Eleven-Dash-Line”, which is claimed by other nations that it has no foundations and ignores the rights of coastal nations within the UNCLOS (*United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*, n.d.), this restricts the freedom of navigation for various countries. Thus constant conflicting interpretations between historical records have led to disagreements over the ownership of specific islands.

During the 1960’s to the 1970’s it was discovered that the South China Sea possessed

large amounts of resources, such as oil and gas reserves, potentially fueling tensions and significantly increasing territorial disputes. The economic potential of the region became a major motivator for claiming countries to demand greater sovereignty over the territory (Robinson, 2013).

The UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) legal disagreements with China in 1982 regarding this conflict lead to regional disputes within Southeast Asian countries. UNCLOS established a legal framework for maritime claims based on Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ's) for countries to have the right to explore, exploit, conserve and manage resources within their EEZ's (these extended to over 200 nautical miles from their coastlines). This framework provided a peaceful arrangement for the non-violent settlement of territorial disagreements, based on clearly defined maritime zones (*United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*, n.d.). Moreover, the People's Republic of China's interpretation of this legal approach complicated the peaceful resolution because of their claim toward the "Nine-Dash-Line" (a variation of the "Eleven-Dash-Line"), that secured that there were not only rocks or low tide elevations, but actual islands located within their 200-nautical mile EEZ. This significantly expanded and broadened the People's Republic of China's maritime entitlements beyond what most of the other nations allowed (Air University, 2021).

2. 21st CENTURY

The South China Sea has been a disputed territory where a lot of tension takes place within international communities, some of the most recent. A lot of these conflicts are due to the fact that there has been a lack of international compromises and agreements. As it is a territory full of richness and reefs, there have been significant claims that overpower. (Kusuma et al, 2021). In 1982, The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), passed a framework which includes clear boundaries, however there are no clear rules to be followed regarding islands.

In 1990, the People's Republic of China had a grand economic increase which made them assert power over this territory, by their naval presence as well as the rapid construction of artificial islands. In 1992, made the attempt to manage these tensions through peaceful measures such as dialogue but this was seen as a notably temporary solution with a lot of limitations. Moreover, there was a brief (90-minute) battle in early 1996 with the Republic of

the Philippines in the Mischief Reef. This incident marked the first military confrontation for the People's Republic of China, other than the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in ASEAN. When the tension decreased, the Republic of Philippines and the People's Republic of China signed an armistice. (Xu, 2020).

In 1998, there was a peaceful USA and the People's Republic of China agreement signed where the Defense Secretaries agreed to set the MMCA (Military Maritime Consultative Agreement) in motion. Some significant aspects covered were ship & aircraft communication as well as procedures and techniques that would ensure the stability of this plan. The main goal was to offer a setting where there is shared knowledge of operational protocols. (S. Capen, 1999).

In 2002, the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea was signed by ASEAN and China which is a code of conduct that explicitly covers the principles of peaceful disputes, but most importantly, the freedom of overflight and navigation.

A key event in this hostile dispute was in 2009, when the Federation of Malaysia and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam submitted their UN claims. This was a joint request, where the two parties wanted to expand their territory beyond the normal two hundred mile boundary. the People's Republic of China expressed their disapproval for their proposal, as it was seen as a threat to make this issue more global. This took place in Hanoi, 2009. (Xu, 2020).

The United States of America, although primarily irrelevant, affirmed its interest in the South China Sea exactly on July 23, 2010. This was a crucial step in this important controversy. By reiterating the neutrality, the People's Republic of China became offended with this as it made their fight increasingly difficult as it had initially claimed all right to islands and space. This was a great benefit for the Socialist Republic of Vietnam as its main effort was to internationalize this conflict. Furthermore, the People's Republic of China stopped military dialogue and decided to not accept outside input. (M. Taylor, 2014). In addition to the elevated tension, September of the same year, was when a Chinese boat clashed with the Japanese coast guard, these led to the arrest of citizens but it was all released when the Japan's Prime Minister met the People's Republic of China's premier, but this event rose questions about Japans' fragility towards Chinese management.

In 2011, the Philippines renamed the South China Sea in official documents and

started calling it the West Philippine Sea. Furthermore, Hilary Clinton also addressed the given territory by this name. This was a new yet unofficial power dynasty where these two international parties addressed the power in this place and a new alliance was covered.

By 2012, a new leadership transition took place. Abe Shinzo, Japan's Prime Minister, warned the international community that the South China Sea would become "Lake Beijing". He also stated that the United States of America, Republic of India, and Australia would "safeguard" the maritime commons. However, with all the transforming powers in individual communities, the strategy was in complete instability with the constant shift from land-based power to maritime power. (Maizland, 2022). In June, Vietnam passed a maritime law which allowed for them to get advice when a foreign ship passed through the area. But in July, shockingly, ASEAN did not release a communiqué, this caused the members to think whether the 10 members should be included in the joint statement, but all of this allowed for a temporary freeze of the rising tensions. In September, Japan bought \$26 million worth of the islands, which brought out an angry response from the Chinese government, but Japan defended its decision by stating that it was a necessary procedure in order to protect its sovereignty. (Xu, 2020)

In 2013, the People's Republic of China elevated its military air defense by stating that it could take necessary military action, which made the tensions increase unimaginably. In response, the Republic of (South) Korea, the United States of America and Japan put military aircraft on patrol over the East China Sea, while Japan and the People's Republic of China summoned each other's diplomats to file formal objections.

From 2014 up until 2016, the tensions kept on rising as events such as the United States of America and the Republic of the Philippines New Defense Pact where a 10-year contract was created in order to express their solemn solidarity in this problem. Moreover, the People's Republic of China and Japan discussed the current situation, to reach a 4-point agreement and come to viable and diplomatic terms. In 2016, the People's Republic of China seized a United States of America underwater drone. According to the United States of America government, the Chinese government was completely ignoring the warning to return said drone, but in return, the People's Republic of China accused the United States of America of encouraging tensions.

By 2019, this issue was not close to being resolved, especially when the Republic of

the Philippines president became alarmed by the Chinese ships, and said that he would send troops if these ships were not to return. But it was not until the 2020 pandemic when tensions completely rose and the international communities became more severely strict and aggressive. (Xu, 2020).

III. CURRENT SITUATION

The escalating tensions in this crucial maritime region is, to this day, a very present dispute which englobes international territory. Since the pandemic in 2020, all of these regional issues have increased greatly.

In 2022, there was a new change of scenery where the Republic of the Philippines welcomed a new president, Ferdinand Marcos Jr. who adopted a stricter stance on this topic and in the People's Republic of China. However, in 2023, the Chinese Coast Guard sent ships to the area that was proclaimed by the Republic of the Philippines which interfered greatly with the armistice earlier made. Furthermore, the Republic of the Philippines also used all of this to its advantage in the way that it made stronger bonds with the other powers. The United States of America signed agreements which basically includes support in their armed countries, moreover, Japan also expressed their agreement and support in the way that it also helped to sell their weapons to the Republic of the Philippines and to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. (Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea, n.d)

Since the beginning of the present year, 2024, tensions have risen in an unimaginable way. The United States of America has signed recent agreements that deepen the agreement with the Republic of the Philippines, which is inferable that in the case of a catastrophic war, their direct support would be given to the Republic of the Philippines. The Republic of the Philippines constantly calls out and accuses the People's Republic of China of every new attack, such as the March event, in which the People's Republic of China had an underwater attack aimed for the Republic of the Philippines. The Republic of the Philippines citizens have taken a rise in this polemic and the indigenous philippine people have said that they are "ready to fight" for and if the tensions keep increasing in a dangerous and alarming way. In April, the People's Republic of China's president stated that no matter the external interference, it won't make him stop his meetings in Republic of China (Taiwan), as well as a profound and stronger bond created between the United States of America and Japan, which announced stronger ties. And the United States of America, the Republic of the Philippines

and Japan stressed internationally how big of a dangerous and negative impact this may have if things do not start to settle down and if maritime laws are not followed accordingly. And most recently, during May, the People's Republic of China attacked directly with water cannons a Philippine coast guard ship in which the Republic of the Philippines protested for the 20th time. (*South China Sea*, n.d.)

As clearly seen, it is noticeable that even though this issue is mainly between the Republic of the Philippines and the People's Republic of China it affects the globe as a whole and the citizens.

Furthermore, the South China Sea continues to be a hotspot for geopolitical tensions that provoke uncertainty regarding freedom of navigation, access to resources and the potential concern for military conflict (*South China Sea*, n.d.). In 2023, the sea dispute intensified with several significant instances adding to the increasing precarious situation. The People's Republic of China continued its strategy to fortify their claims by the construction and militarization of artificial islands or reefs within their reach, increasing the military activity by boosting deployments of Chinese warships and aircrafts in the region, including near zones of other South China Sea claimants (Chatys, 2024). Thus, it is discussed that in 2023 the harassment involving Chinese Coast Guard boats towards the Republic of Philippines ships attempting to reach the Second Thomas Shoal (located in the Spratly Islands), using aggressive tactics; Water cannons, lasers, and hostile maneuvers, to destroy them. Additionally, the People's Republic of China challenged the Republic of the Philippines naval ships operating near Scarborough Shoal (a series of small rocks and islands) this past year on multiple occasions contributing to unease in the region (Royandoyan, 2024).

The South China Sea is critical for worldwide trade. According to data retrieved from the past year, an estimated \$3.4 trillion worth of products transits throughout the sea each year, accounting to nearly a third of global maritime trade (Unbound, 2021). Disruptions in the region could have significant economic repercussions around the globe. It is predicted by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) that there is a presence of approximately 11 billion barrels of untapped oil and 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas (*Data Collection Sites in South China Sea*, n.d.). The competition for these resources has provoked and aroused tensions in the past year among the claimant states, all of them becoming protective and territorial over their EEZ's.

Southeast Asian nations, including the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the Republic of the Philippines, the Federation of Malaysia, Brunei Danassan and the Republic of Indonesia have overlapping territorial claims over the South China Sea, but are all rejecting the People's Republic of China's expansive claims upholding the majority of the sea. They all advocate sustaining international law, specifically the UNCLOS (*Bloomberg*, n.d.). On the other hand, the People's Republic of China opposes and rejects several parts of the UNCLOS, particularly the ones involved in the territorial claims grounded in historical considerations. (Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea, n.d).

The United States of America continued to send FONOPs (Freedom of Navigation Operations) by deploying navy vessels near the contested islands and reefs. These operations have the main focus of upholding the principle of freedom of navigation guaranteed by international law. Nevertheless, the People's Republic of China strongly opposed the FONOPs, viewing them as confrontational procedures that called into question their territorial claims (Freund, 2017). Hence, in 2023, the People's Republic of China's responses to the FONOPs got increasingly aggressive, full of reports with allegations of dangerous maneuvers and attempts to harass the United States of America ships leading the operations (Mongilio, 2023). There was increased China military activity in the past year under the Paracel islands, the Scarborough Shoal and the Second Thomas Shoal, accumulating tensions with the Republic of the Philippines and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. If by any means, an accident happened during these aggressive attacks, it could trigger a wider conflict with the use of strong force by the nations involved, potentially drawing other allied countries into the act of aggression.

IV. UN ACTIONS

The United Nations has taken actions regarding the escalating tensions, territorial disputes and the threatened regional stability in the South China Sea by addressing the conflict with various possible solutions and agreements; The United States of America first commenced with the FONOPS (Freedom of Navigation Operations) operations in the 1980's to sustain the principle of freedom of navigation solidified in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which is a widely acknowledged international treaty that ensures free and unrestricted

passage on the high seas and in the EEZ's (U.S. Department of Defense, n.d.). These United States of America navy ships execute periodic patrols in the People's Republic of China's claimed territorial seas and the exclusive economic zones in the South China Sea. The patrols question the legitimacy of the People's Republic of China's broad maritime claims, which exceed what is permitted under UNCLOS. Thus, the operations are still taking place in a recent time frame and are currently targeting the People's Republic of China's claims on vast sections of the sea, including resource rich areas and key maritime channels (America 's Navy, 2023). By conducting FONOPS, the United States of America demonstrates its support for regional allies in the international community with territorial disputes in the South China Sea and they aim to maintain the regional stability overseas (Standifer, 2017).

In 2013 the Republic of the Philippines commenced the persuasion of arbitration proceedings against the People's Republic of China's assertions under the UNCLOS. This specific legal procedure under the auspices of the UN enables an impartial tribunal to judge the legitimacy of the People's Republic of China's claims according to international law (Permanent Court of Arbitration, n.d.). The origin of the arbitration ruling came from the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Subsequently, in 2016 the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA); intergovernmental organization acknowledged for resolving legal disputes in the international community (Permanent Court of Arbitration, n.d.), addressed the ongoing issue between the Republic of Philippines and People's Republic of China. The PCA sided with the Republic of the Philippines due to multiple reasons; the People's Republic of China's historical claims where dismissed as a legal foundation for its enormous maritime claims, the PCA defined and clarified deeply the Republic of the Philippines EEZ which included assets claimed by the People's Republic of China such as the Scarborough Shoals, and ultimately the tribunal found various Chinese acts within the South China Sea to be illegal (construction works on disputed territories, interference with navigation and fishing operations and environmental harms) (Butowsky, 2014). This ended in the reaffirmation of the UNCLOS as the legal framework for resolving maritime disputes regarding the sea, a blueprint of the South China Sea was offered in case some legal changes were made, and the court's decision inflicted a significant defeat and loss of the People's Republic of China's vast territorial ambitions in the region. (*United Nations*, 2016).

The United Nations Secretary General since 2017, António Guterres has regularly expressed the organization's official position on the South China Sea dispute (Lee, 2020). The Secretary General encourages all the engaged parties to self-restraint, avoid actions that heighten tensions and to maintain open communication to prevent future misunderstandings (*United Nations*, 2022).

In addition to what has been mentioned earlier, the UN although it has taken significant action to ease the tensions, it is still at a neutral point which makes the powers lack authority and the tensions continue to escalate.

A lot of the things that the UN has done includes the intent of peacekeeping by discussions which usually lead up to a legal framework, although the powers do not usually abide by this and continue to work by their claims. The most official legal framework and most important is as mentioned before the UNCLOS (Law of the Sea Convention) as even the People's Republic of China ratifies this. (Air University (AU), 2021)

There have also been numerous discussions in order to achieve a better and more viable solution and to promote peace and stability internationally. However, they have been quite insignificant since the issue remains indifferent. The security council has gathered on various dates to better this but they have been unsuccessful in this aspect. (*Peace and Security*, n.d.). They still continue their hard yet tiring work to better this aspiration.

Moreover, the People's Republic of China's stubbornness and the Republic of the Philippines' peevishness, makes the possibility for a better outcome out of reach in the upcoming months and even years, not only this but it also 'blocks' the UN's ability to play a more significant role. Furthermore, the UN has the ability to take a stance by supporting initiatives, environmental protection, resources management...

Additionally, the UN lacks authority to govern over UNCLOS, but provides assistance when necessary, but this makes the instability more evident and the enforcement more invisible. Not to mention that the UN has to comply and respect the sovereignty of each individual country, meaning that they cannot just create a role in which they tell each country what to do. All of this has to be done efficiently and in an unbiased way to come to the fairest solution that will benefit all without any more

conflict.

For future references, the UN will continue to basically do the same, try to come to a peaceful outcome, by dialoguing, discussing and negotiating. Unless unpredictable events take place that would widely interfere with current world wide peace, safety and well being of the international community and its citizens

To conclude with this statement, not a lot of action has taken place due to the significant and powerful stance that the involved parties have taken, making it quite difficult for the UN and its branches to make a clear and concise pathway that will benefit all and stop the tensions not only from escalating but from happening at all.

V. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

As formerly discussed, the South China Sea is a major waterway engaged in a complex territorial dispute. Unilateral operations and the lack of straightforward channels of communication heighten the probability of misinterpretation and military confrontation. To safeguard regional stability and security, an approach that is holistic emphasizing a peaceful settlement, transparency, and international cooperation is essential for a non-violent resolution.

1. Recognizing the rights of coastal states by strengthening the legal framework by establishing a binding Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea, as a set of guidelines that will help all members of the international community involved to be treated fairly and with respect (Dang, 2023).
 - a. Encourage all nations involved to advocate for the mandatory dispute settlement system outlined in the UNCLOS. This enables fair arbitration of maritime disputes, promotes a rule-based approach and reduces the needs of unilateral acts. By enforcing this mechanism the disputes can be adjudicated by an independent tribunal to foster reliability and decrease the possibility of bias.
 - b. Seeking for legally binding outcomes, the tribunal decisions should provide definitive and conclusive regulations on maritime claims to eliminate ambiguity and reduce the risk of future disputes arising.
2. Further recalling that the South China Sea dispute transcends legal,

economic and military concerns, fostering a cooperative atmosphere through ASEAN is an essential step toward a peaceful settlement. Empowering ASEAN would maintain cordial relations between all parties involved; Reinforcing internal communication, promoting regional solidarity, addressing internal disputes, adhering to mechanisms of conflict resolution, provide resources to member states to strengthen diplomatic capacities, effective and active participation in ASEAN, implementation of regional initiatives, enhance security, build strong partnerships with regional and international powers, and full implementation of former agreements within the nations involved.

- a. The committee calls upon a strengthened ASEAN considering it would ultimately play a vital role in nurturing peaceful solutions in the South China Sea, promoting regional stability in accordance with the UN ethics. Therefore, ASEAN can serve as an impartial forum for open communication and dialogue amongst claimants, supporting the understanding and comprehension of claimant states.
- b. Further recommends regional economic integration and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). By encouraging deeper economic integration RCEP can provide a significant incentive and a strong foundation for regional stability given that it promotes economic interdependence where all parties are rewarded. Thus, economically integrated states are more likely to seek peaceful resolutions to disputes since conflict could compromise their shared economic benefits (*Tiglao, n.d.*).

3. As mentioned earlier, the UN does not have direct power over the nations to dictate what should be done in this scenario, therefore a good and viable solution would be to solidify the UN's branches like UNCLOS. Because without this, the problem becomes way more abstract when it comes to finding a viable and good outcome. The obvious solution would be for the countries to agree over many different contracts and discussions to genuinely give more authority to the overall UN committee in order to disperse what is most fair across the globe.

- a. The best and most practical way to do this is to create public campaigns with the sole purpose of encouraging responsible

and beneficial actions from the nations, gaining support for UNCLOS and the UN and creating awareness where the target audience is the global community, the media and policymakers. These campaigns will be widely interactive and publically attractive where all the benefits of UNCLOS will be greatly highlighted.

- b. Social media nowadays is a huge part of life, therefore, we would reinforce our social media with collaborations of known and good brands, humanitarian interest stories, promotion of hashtags...

4. An excellent way to enforce a solution is to strengthen the UN's Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS). This is because the promotion of DOALOS will give more credibility and support from not only citizens but also people and organizations with authority and by strengthening this branch, it automatically fortifies the UN as a whole.

- a. This could be done with an increase in the funding with legal assistance, economically and to generally give support in needed areas, there will be a special recruitment of experts in this topic and on maritime disputes, an investment could be made with new and more modern technology in order to have a clear and effective data analysis. By doing all of this, DOALOS can and will provide a more defined resolution which will include long-term maritime laws and will give a more peaceful agreement.

VI. COUNTRIES INVOLVED

1. People's Republic of China

For the last century, the People's Republic of China has had a crucial role around the escalating tensions arising in the South China Sea. Their main claim rests under the "Nine-Dash-Line", an outline that covers the vast majority of the sea and notably overlaps

the EEZ's of nearly every claimant country surrounding the sea, triggering various Southeast Asian countries (Nguyen, 2005). The People's Republic of China has strengthened its position by undertaking land acquisition operations on disputed islands, and enforcing its military presence in the region. Their forceful stance in conjunction with their rejection of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) verdict against its claims in 2016, has led to fears in the region, and damaging relations with neighboring countries such as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Republic of the Philippines (United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, 2021). The People's Republic of China's role is critical in determining the course of the conflict and the limitations maintaining the stability in the South China Sea; People's Republic of China's assertive actions such as disregarding the international law (PCA) raise concerns about the threat to the international security and peace, this escalating tensions could lead to jeopardizing vital trade routes and fishing grounds provoking a great impact on global trade having significant economic repercussions leading to a possible humanitarian crisis.

2. Socialist Republic of Vietnam

As one of the most vital states with high stakes in the South China Sea dispute, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam stands in a critical position. Sharing a long maritime border with the People's Republic of China, Socialist Republic of Vietnam directly opposes the People's Republic of China's claims to the Paracel and Spratly Islands, contributing to strongly rejecting the People's Republic of China's operations on land reclamation to expand its territory and militarization on disputed reefs due to the fact that these actions are considered direct threats to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam's sovereignty (*Rough Waters Ahead for Vietnam-China Relations*, n.d.). The Socialist Republic of Vietnam vehemently disapproves of the People's Republic China's rejection of the PCA stance, which ultimately favored Vietnam's position on maritime boundaries. This sets a dangerous precedent since it weakens the established legal framework for solving disputes peacefully, undermining broader implications on international law (*International Crisis Group*, 2021). The Socialist Republic of Vietnam has a crucially important role in advocating for a peaceful resolution based on international law, specifically the 2016 PCA verdict. The republic supports dialogue, freedom of navigation and legally binding the Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea as a proactive strategy (Peng, 2024).

3. Republic of the Philippines

The Republic of the Philippines has a vital role in this dispute. Currently, the Republic of the Philippines uses legal venues to try and come to control over this region with filed reports to the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) which has successfully challenged aspects of the "nine-dashed line." Moreover, The Republic of the Philippines is one of the main proponents of ASEAN's leadership in the South China Sea dispute. They encourage and advocate for peaceful conflict settlement and unified regional position based on UNCLOS. One of the things that characterizes the Republic Philippines is that it seeks support from other nations that have an interest in this topic, with the United States of America, Japan, Australia... in trying to deter and weaken the People's Republic of China, their strongest opposition. The Republic Philippines tries to raise awareness on this topic with their citizens and always establishes a clear and effective understanding with the People's Republic of China in order to evade a misunderstanding which could be a dangerous initiative. However, economically, the Republic of Philippines has a difficult relationship with the People's Republic of China as they both are constantly in the competition to assert power and its territorial claims.

4. The Federation of Malaysia

In this issue, the Federation of Malaysia plays a crucial yet strategic role that involves upholding a balance trying to preserve a stable relationship with the People's Republic of China, this is usually done by being extremely careful and not having any productive actions against the People's Republic of China, this includes being extremely careful when managing their military, however, the Federation of Malaysia has subtly expressed concerns with the People's Republic of China's actions. In contrast with The Republic of the Philippines, it takes a diplomatic approach to maintain its posture. Their main goal is to emphasize their rights and interest, as they once aligned in their 1979 map but not have the People's Republic of China against this nation, in order to not have any difficulties that may challenge their stance. Malaysia is an active participant of ASEAN discussions and advocates accordingly to the UNCLOS principles. Their strategy mainly involves having legal and maritime presence without any direct confrontation with any nation involved. They have shown that their interest in doing all of this is to maintain a trade and investment relationship but to have their claims very well expressed.

5. Brunei Darussalam

Brunei Darussalam, usually known only by Brunei, occupies what can be called a rare stance on this problem. Brunei Darussalam also takes a less obvious posture in this issue making it more “quiet” than other nations. Its territorial claims there are present but relatively small. The solitary thing that Brunei Darussalam asks for is Louisa Reef in the Spratly Reefs. It has greatly expressed its disdain towards the dispute and does not want to be an obvious part in it. It is also an active member of ASEAN but not as present as other members. Additionally, it does not take any aggressive actions in this and limits its military greatly to not provoke anything. As the Federation of Malaysia and the Republic of the Philippines it has strong economic trading with the People’s Republic of China, therefore, it does not do anything to jeopardize their relationship. Its top priority is internal stability and economic growth rather than having an assertive role in this dispute. All of its past approaches and actions make it a good and valuable asset in coming to a solution.

6. Republic of China (Taiwan)
7. Republic of Indonesia
8. United States of America
9. Japan
10. Commonwealth of Australia
11. Republic of Singapore
12. French Republic
13. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
14. Federal Republic of Germany
15. New Zealand

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