



South China Sea



The issue of the South China Sea has existed for many years dating back to the times of the French Indochinese colonies and the Imperial Japanese Sphere of Economic Influence. Today, the South China Sea is a highly disputed region of the sea, with countries such as Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines Taiwan and China all claiming large expanses of the area. These claims have dated back to the 1850s, when China made a claim to all islands in the sea thus creating minor skirmishes in the region. Most recently, there were a series of naval clashes between the Philippines, South Vietnam, and China in the late 20th century around 1990. These clashes were over a collection of archipelagos and island in the South China Sea called the Paracel and Spratley Islands, which all countries around the region have a valid and longstanding claim to. These islands have been claimed by China and the Philippines during the 1970s, causing conflict throughout the 1980s, with China occupying a large area of the Paracel Islands in 1970 causing violent outrage in neighbouring Taiwan. In 1996, in retaliation to the Taiwanese President gaining a visa in the United States of America, the Chinese navy launched massive military exercises in the area to show that China was ready to attack Taiwan. In response, the United States Navy launched a fleet in the area to oppose the Chinese, based in Taiwan, defending other nations claims the archipelagos and weakening Chinas military influence in the region significantly.

Clearly, this misconduct and unruly behaviour is a major issue and combined with the fact that there are potential oil and natural gases that lie under the seabed, which may cause further conflicts in times to come, that is ready to be explored and possibly exploited, solutions need to be found to establish the stability in the area and protect nations sovereign rights these natural resources. Some countries, such as Vietnam, have already exploited this abundance of natural oil and this could cause major harm to the aquatic life in the region so acceptable ways to exploit the oil need to be found, which already has further brought the area under the strain of environmental activists and UN, and other, treaties.

China has signed the Declaration of Conduct with the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) which agreed on universal code of conduct in the area, but failed to establish to surrounding countries national claims to the islands in the region. However, this code has often been disrupted by Chinese aggression, including the harassment of a United States naval surveillance ship in March 2009, which further increases tensions between the two global superpowers. In addition, there have been further clashes with Vietnamese oil and gas surveillance ships involving Chinese patrol ships. Clearly, this code of conduct has not been enforced or respected as well as it should and maybe alterations to the code need to be added so that all nations to agree and follow the code and possible sanctions put upon countries who break the code.

Tensions have further been raising tensions between the United States and China because the United States has exercised their presence in the South China Sea through international free space movement and freedom of navigation, which has led to China's threat to United States aircraft and vessels passing in the regions via electronic interception. In retaliation, China has built a series of artificial islands and set up military bases on them, which include ballistic missiles and nuclear submarines. These tensions have been building in an arms race, of kinds, between the two countries and any future incidents or even disputes in the area may spark a serious future conflict. This would be extremely bad as there is an estimated \$5 trillion worth

of goods are imported and exported annually along the South Chinese shipping lanes, not only to mention the countless lives lost in the conflict itself and the damage done to the surrounding wildlife by any long period war that could possibly follow.

Points to Consider:

- When writing your clauses, you should consider, the prompt questions below:
- How will you attempt to ease disputes in the area?
- Will your clause define the sovereignty of the areas in the region and will it continue to allow free navigation in the surrounding territories?
- Will it restrict the military presence in the sea to ease tensions?
- How will your clause enforce a possibly improved universal code of conduct in the region?

Useful Links:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/south-china-sea>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_China_Sea
- <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/8324967/south-china-sea-world-war-military-senator/>