

UNSC

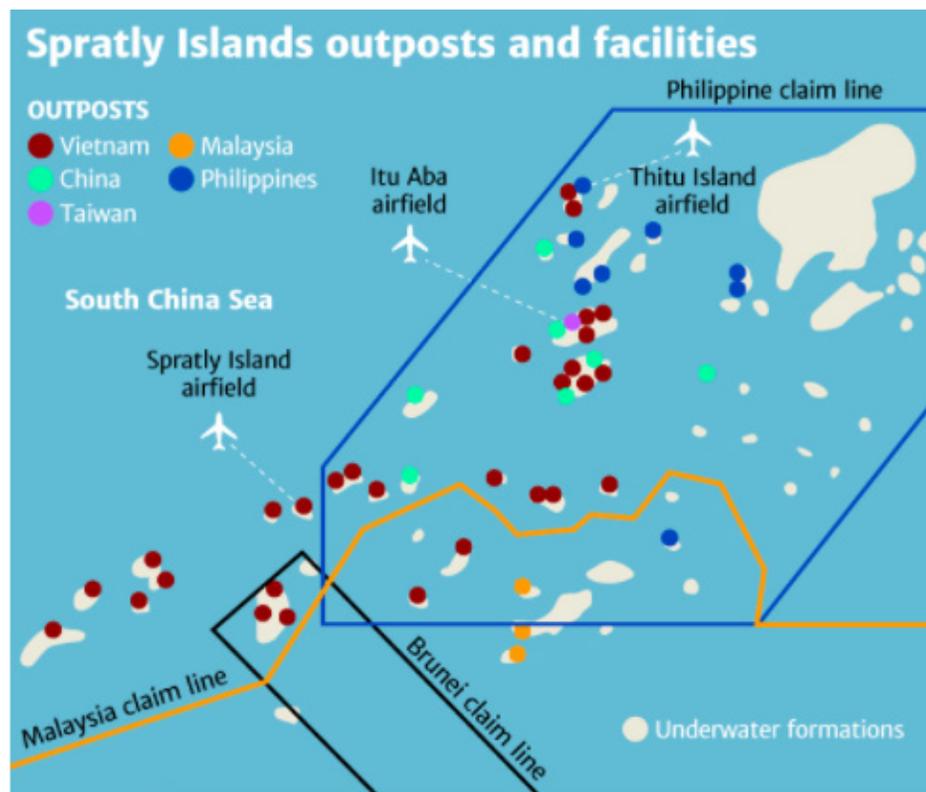
Conflict in South China Sea



Ewan Chang
Skylar Kahng

INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE

Since 1946, the Security Council has been upholding the value of security and peace in the United Nations. As one of the first committees to exist since the start of the United Nations, the Security Council has a primary responsibility to serve the International Security, Peace and Stability with 5 permanent and 10 non-permanent members. It focuses on matters that threaten global peace and aims to mediate disputes between nations by suggesting proposals for a peaceful end.



GECMUN aims to debate on conflicts around the South China Sea and reach terms of settlement based on the mission and charter of the UN Security Council. We, as members of the security council, have a responsibility to ensure the protection of the rights of every UN nations and its citizens. The Security Council is a fundamental part of the UN, and as a committee that holds more power than any other part of the UN, we have a bigger responsibility to handle our positions with greater gravity. GECMUN is not simply a conference for MUN, but rather an organization determined to provide solutions to international affairs to ensure the safety and peace of the world and all its residents.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRS

Hello dear delegates, my name is Ewan Chang, your chair in the Security Council. I am attending sophomore year in KIS Jeju High School, and I am passionate about MUN within my heart. The chair wishes every delegate who visits the conference to take delight in this fruitful debate.

Greetings honourable delegates, my name is Skylar Kahng. I will be serving you as a chair with Ewan in 2017 GEC MUN Security Council. I am from North London Collegiate School JEJU in year 11. We will help you as chairs to make distinguished and remarkable experience in GEC MUN Security Council.

Through the years since the establishment of the United Nations, it has solved many foreign and domestic conflicts across the world. The importance and significance of the United Nations on the global stage cannot be denied. However, even to this day, conflicts and disputes between neighboring sovereignties are rampant. It is our job, as the United Nations Security Council to make sure these issues are rightfully resolved and compromised to ensure the safety and peace of the world. This chair wishes to all the delegates, as respectful members of the Council, to come fully prepared in research. The chair also wishes that the delegates do not feel any sort of pressure or nervousness as there will be no judging in the proceedings. This chair hopes that every delegate enjoys his or her time on the committee. Furthermore, the chair believes there will be successful conference that will lead us to satisfy the ultimate goal of model united nation.

Regards,

Ewan Chang and Skylar Kahng

INFORMATION ON THE TOPIC

Historical background

The issue of the South China Sea has been ongoing for many years. As the issue involves over seven different countries brawling for more control, the issue is also one that cannot be resolved swiftly. There are numerous areas in the sea that are the subject of dispute among these nations, most notably the Vietnamese Coast and the South China Sea Islands.



The reasons for these disputes are simple—natural resources. Prior to the claim of natural resources in the region, China rightfully claimed it. However, as the information of the oil reserves surfaced, other nations started claiming their land in the sea. The area holds one of the highest oil and gas deposits in the world and China claims it's the “second Persian sea”. No doubt, any country able to lay their hands on the vast amounts of resources of the sea, are achieving a chance to improve their economy and decrease their reliance on foreign oil. While the estimates vary, most agree that the amount of oil beneath is ginormous, resulting many companies to set up offshore fracking to exploit its resources. In addition, the place is home to large amounts of valuable fish that could greatly boost the wealth of the country. In fact, according to some reports, around 8% of the world's fishing industry is said to have come from the South China Sea. The South China Sea is also an important course for cargo boats, and over 270 ships use it every single day. Nations want to make their own canals in the sea to increase their profits.

The Philippines first discovered the large oil reserves in 1976 during its exploration of the area for natural resources. That's when China came in and lodged complaints regarding the explorations by the Philippines, asserting that they first claimed the area in 1947 by the Kuomintang Government (this is known as the eleven-dotted-line, or the nine-dotted line, after 1949).

More conflict started in the 1970s when Malaysia claimed the Spratly Islands (in the South China Sea) as their land. Then the Philippines started declared that the Spratly Islands belonged to them.

Chinese Fishery Incidents in Disputed Waters, 2000-2015

The Pacific rim has numerous overlapping maritime claims. For years, competing nations have exploited fishing vessels to press their advantage. This can be useful, but can also get out of control, sparking short, sharp crises.



Locations of incidents and parties involved

- A** Sea of Japan: Russia
- B** Sea of Japan: Japan
- C** Bohai Sea: South Korea
- D** Yellow Sea: United States, South Korea, North Korea
- E** Southwest of Japan: Japan
- F** East China Sea (general): United States, Japan, South Korea
- G** Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands (East China Sea): Japan
- H** Gulf of Tonkin: Vietnam
- I** East of Hainan (South China Sea): United States
- J** Paracel Islands (South China Sea): Vietnam
- K** Vietnam Central Coast (South China Sea): Vietnam
- L** Spratly Islands (South China Sea): Philippines
- M** Tubbataha Reef (Sulu Sea): Philippines
- N** Arafura Sea: Indonesia

Source: Council on Foreign Relations, Strategic Research. Copyright Stratfor 2014. www.stratfor.com

OIL PRODUCTION (in 1,000 barrels a day)

	2003	2013
China	3,406	4,180
Indonesia	1,176	882
Malaysia	760	657

Thailand	244	457
Vietnam	361	350
Brunei	214	135



Status Quo

At the current moment, the Spratly Islands are the most disputed of the areas. China, with eight islands, has the most control, while Vietnam, with 29 soldiers, has the highest military presence in the region. Aside from this, eight islands are under the sovereignty of the Philippines, five under Malaysia, two by Brunei and one by Taiwan. The government of various countries have called for increased army spending in the region to ensure their territory. So far, the biggest milestone so far is the agreement made in 2011, that stated they would cooperate on oil drilling and scientific research.

Despite this, numerous cases have happened where nations became fiercely defensive about their borders. In 2011, an Indian Navy boat crossed the sea, to which China claimed violated their territory. This issue led to India and Vietnam agreeing to cooperate on the exploitation of oil in the region. However, this resulted in China urging other nations to respect its sovereignty.

Aside from the main nations, the United States has voiced support against China, and they wish for their economic and military activity to be permitted in the region. Indonesia and China also have had some disagreements over the region due to the proximity of Indonesia's Natuna Islands and the Chinese nine-dash line. In addition, Cambodia, Thailand, and Laos supported China. Many ethnic minorities living in the region have also been involved in the form of independence movements, notably the Cham people in Vietnam, and Moro people in the Philippines. They criticized Philippines' colonial history and backed China in the disputes.

Stances of UN Member States and Parties involved

Due to the various countries involved, many other UN member states have taken a stance on the issue based on their friendship with the nation's mixed up in the conflict.

The United States, with a long history of rivalry against China, has recently stated that they are against China's standpoint and repeatedly criticized them by saying they have no basis to claim any part of the South China Sea is theirs. Despite the US not being a part of the UNCLOS, they have maintained military presence throughout the region and is currently interested in the vast economic potential in the area. China has long frowned upon these actions and said that that they were an "effective attack on China", and stated that outsider nations shouldn't be involved in the conflict.

Indonesia, another prominent country in the region, has an exclusive economic zone which overlaps with China's claimed "nine-dotted-line". They have had numerous quarrels in the past on trespassing each other's territories despite China admitting Indonesia's jurisdiction in the Natuna Islands economic zone. There is still much tension, especially from Indonesia, who urged nations to exercise international law on the trespassing of maritime borders.

Cambodia has long had a rough relationship with Vietnam after their invasion of Cambodia's territory. Hence, Cambodia has always voiced support for China and has gone against Vietnam. Along with Cambodia, Thailand and Laos have always pledged their support for China, although they haven't been much involved.

Aside from the nations, the indigenous ethnic people of the South China Sea, the Chams and the Montagnards have been long oppressed by the Vietnamese government, especially in the massacres of 2001 and 2004. The Vietnamese government is currently trying to mask all evidence of this incident in order to secure their position at the South China Sea. While they have never taken China's side, they have always gone against Vietnam in the debate. However, countries such as the United States wishes to recruit Vietnam as an ally against China and the sufferings of the ethnic peoples are largely ignored.

A muslim ethnic group of the Moro in the Philippines have also long led rebellions against the Filipino government. They claimed that China and the Moro were allies, as they both have a history of militaristic tension with the Philippines. While they have never voiced support for China, they consider them to be their valuable ally in the debate of the South China Sea.

Previous successful territorial dispute cases

i) Upper Silesia (1921)

Upper Silesia was an industrial region situated on the border between Germany and Poland. Both Germans and Poles inhabited it, and both countries wanted control over the area, largely for its rich iron and steel industries. In 1920, a plebiscite was organised for Silesians to decide which country they wish to join as the Treaty of Versailles had given the people of Upper Silesia the right to have referendum on whether they wanted to be part of Weimar Germany or part of Poland. British and French soldiers were sent to keep peace during the voting process. Industrial areas mainly voted to stay in Germany, while the rural areas voted in favour of joining Poland. After a six-week inquiry, the League decided to carve Upper Silesia along these lines. Consequently, Germany got most of the land, but the part given to Poland contained the rich industrial area of Silesia, so the Germans were resentful by this loss. Many safeguards were established to prevent such further disputes. Rail links between the two countries were safeguarded, and water and power supplies from one side of the border to the other could be arranged. Both countries accepted the decision. Upper Silesia was a success for the League of Nations.

ii) Aaland Islands (1921)

Both Finland and Sweden wanted control of the Aaland Islands, located midway between the two countries. The Islands were owned by Finland, but were heavily populated by the Swedes. Both countries were threatening to fight over the islands. Both sides appealed to the League for intervention. After studying the matter closely, the league concluded that the islands should go to Finland. The Swedish accepted the League's ruling and war was avoided, and this peaceful resolution was seen as major success.



Possible Solutions

The issue is rather a complex geopolitical one and oftentimes the personal sentiment of the countries involved comes into play into the debate. It's important to note, however, that there can be one or more solutions and the personal affairs between the countries shouldn't get involved. It shouldn't be a matter of what country one is friends with or not, but rather whether it violates international law or not.

One common solution may be that we could evenly distribute the maritime borders among the countries which would be the most equal and compromisable way, and many Southeast Asian countries that are being trumped by the power of China will agree with this solution. However, a problem may arise in the fact that China doesn't wish to give up its borders and the Philippines claims that since they discovered the oil first, they should have most of the share.

It's important not to take the side of any particular country in the debate and we should all try to work in a spirit of brotherhood to find a common point. If we give a nation like China and the Philippines more of the South China Sea, while the "big powers" may agree and the resolution may pass, the smaller nations in the region may see it as giving more power to the already-humongous countries.

Another way may be to employ a joint-force in the region with equal military presence and equal rights over its oil. This may be the most viable solution for all of the nations to work together, but then again we must take into account other countries in the region that are indirectly involved in the issue who might take problem with this solution. On top of that, the United States wishes to invest in its economic potential, and with the deteriorated relationship between China and the US, it'll be hard to reach another agreement over this.

Questions to consider

1. How does each member state benefit from claiming their rights of South China Sea region?
2. What are the factors that restricts the issue to be resolved? Consider past resolutions and their successes and failures when answering this question.
3. Why is this region in need of attention in terms of international security?

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