



# DISEC

TOPIC A:

## **Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea.**

**Undersecretary:**

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# INTRODUCTION

China has the world's second-largest economy measured by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with a 9% share of the global trade of merchandise export (ChinaTrade, 2020). This is a result of China's attempt of becoming the world's biggest power. As a growing nation, trade, one of the key concepts to expanding a nation's wealth, looks towards innovation and an economical balance. The second concept is security, having national and international security in all manners. This is acquired with time plus allies. As the first committee of Disarmament and International Security, it is the delegate's mission to reach a solution in which the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) are enforced within the committee's main goal, international security.

## BACKGROUND RESEARCH

In 2014, Chinese boats started moving sand from random locations in the Spratly Islands, a group of islands located in South China, currently disputed for ownership. Less than a year later, China had already developed seaports and airbases over these newly man-made islands. By mid-2016, the Fiery Cross Island (an island within the archipelago), a one square mile area, already had a full military base: a ten thousand foot airstrip, missile system, radar, and about 200 stationed troops. There are already 7 known artificial islands within the sea that were developed by the Chinese government and transformed into military bases.

The main concern for the United Nations is the risk of conflict due to the various interests involved. Trade is one of the biggest concerns for all the involved nations. According to the 2015 United States Congressional Research Report, \$5.3 trillion worth of goods moves through the South China Sea each year, which translates to about 30 percent of the world's total maritime trade (CRS, 2020). The sea is also the "major route for liquefied natural gas (LNG) trade, and in 2016, almost 40% of global LNG trade, or about 4.7 trillion cubic feet (tcf), passed through the South China Sea" (EIA, 2017). China has built over 3,200 acres (12.9 squared km) on disputed islands over the last 6 years according to the US Congress in the 2017 Military and Security Developments report. The South China sea also holds 11 million gallons of oil and over 10 percent of the world's fisheries. (EiaGov, 2016)

The South China Sea follows all of the United Nations Conventions on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) agreements, a series of laws that all Southeast Asian countries signed, including China. It states in part 5, article 57 that "The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) shall not extend beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured". China claims that the South China Sea is historically proven to be their rightful territory, ignoring the UNCLOS law about EEZs stated before. They back their claim with the historical nine-dash line used in ancient maps that holds 90 percent of the South China Sea, and with this claim they back their recent development and militarization of islands. In 1973 the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) was established and there was no further dispute until 2014 when the Spratly islands were started to be developed as

military bases. This archipelago is claimed by China, Vietnam, Malaysia, and The Philippines. Every nation that their EEZ includes one of the islands that is part of an archipelago, has the right to claim it as one.

The US has an interest in the region. They started showing this with the Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOps) in 2017, with over 7 naval exercises rising tensions in the region, most recently with China and the US in early 2020. Nations such as the Philippines and Japan have carried out constant patrols in the region, most have lead to radio conversations with the Chinese threatening their stay.

## UNITED NATIONS INTERVENTION

In 2013, the Philippines demanded that China had no rights to the Scarborough Shoal, a zone concerning Philippine's EEZ, leading to the case being heard at the International Court in The Hague. The case ended with the nine-dash line being an invalid claim for the Chinese. China, in The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, has pushed for a code of conduct after The Hague conferences were held, but there has been no progress, despite the fact that in late 2020 another session was held online. There has been no concrete UN intervention.

## POINTS TO CONSIDER

- China intends to control the region.
- The US is looking to protect its interests over the regions.
- Tensions are rising due to naval exercises and international security is the most important objective.
- UNCLOS was signed by all involved countries.
- Southeast Asian countries are being threatened by the situation, both economically and in the security sense.

## QUESTIONNAIRE

- A. What is my country's position?
- B. What are my country's policies?
- C. What can my country do to solve this issue?
- D. Which countries can my delegation work with?
- E. What are three possible solutions?
- F. What has been done to solve the problem?

## USEFUL LINKS

Further topic understanding.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f00V9MQBhg8> (Qatari Source)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/15/world/asia/south-china-sea-dispute-arbitration-explained.html> (US Source)

<https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/territorial-disputes-south-china-sea>

UNCLOS.

[https://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention\\_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos\\_e.pdf](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf)

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<https://www.un.org/en/ga/first/>

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