

South China Sea

- Resources at stake: 11b barrels of oil, trillions of cubic feet of natural gas, fishing grounds, control of trade routes
- Major shipping lane from China passing the Straits of Malacca towards the Indian Ocean, Middle East and Europe, across the Pacific to the USA
- Implications: energy needs, trade/livelihoods, power balance, sovereignty (legitimacy of governance/power → geographical boundary, ability to exercise authority without interference of anyone)

Mercantilism: sea-faring nation

** richest countries in the world are all sea-based

Claimants:

- China/Taiwan: practically the whole thing
- Vietnam: mainly the area around the Spratlys and Paracels
- Philippines: Spratlys (including Scarborough Shoal)
- Malaysia: some islands in the Spratlys and all sea within the EEZ
- Brunei: seas within her EEZ

EEZ: exclusive economic zone

Territory = Sovereignty

As a Pacific nation and resident power, the United States has a national interest in the maintenance of peace and stability ([Why? Why not?](#)), respect for international law, freedom of navigation, and unimpeded lawful commerce in the South China Sea. We do not take a position on competing territorial claims over land features and have no territorial ambitions in the South China Sea ([Are they really sitting on the fence? But if they are sitting on the fence, why did they write this article?](#)); however, we believe the nations of the region should work collaboratively and diplomatically to resolve disputes without coercion, without intimidation, without threats, and without the use of force. ([Is America being hypocritical or being a global court? Could they fear that they will be left out? China's ascendancy](#)) [tone of article: [America is using liberalism as a realist.](#)]

Simply put, if China gains the disputed territory, it may be able to block access of US Naval vessels and aircraft through most of the South China Sea. ([Why would the Chinese want to block access? Why would the Americans be concerned? Americans have relations and resources to exploit in Asia. How does America exert influence in the world? They go around signing contract with other countries by sailing all around the world. So they need the free passage of water](#))

The one thing worse than unequivocal Chinese hegemony would be Chinese victory in the territorial disputes on account of bullying, hostility and force.

As much as the US may want to block the territorial expansion of China, prevent its further enrichment through access to plentiful resources, and curb its hegemonic influence, one of the main reasons the tension in the South China Sea could mount to the point of open conflict between the world's two largest powers is a disputed interpretation of international maritime law. The free movement of American warships and military aircraft through the South China Sea is of sufficient strategic importance that the US would be prepared to fight for it. In many ways, this matter is actually more fundamental to US

interests than the situation in Ukraine or the rise of ISIS in the Middle East. That is why the US may be willing to go to war over the interpretation of an international convention to which it does not belong. (What international convention? - the UN law of the sea treaty which the US does not want to sign it at first)

Hard power refers to coercive tactics: the threat or use of armed forces, economic pressure or sanctions, assassination or other forms of intimidation.

- the ability to change the domestic affairs of other nations through military threats

Soft power includes debates on cultural values and ideologies, the attempt to influence through good example, and the appeal to commonly accepted human values. Means of exercising soft power include diplomacy, dissemination of information, analysis, propaganda, and cultural programming to achieve political ends.

Foreign aid is defined as financial flows, technical assistance, and commodities that are

- 1) designed to promote economic development and welfare as their main objective (thus excluding aid for military or other non-development purposes); and
- 2) are provided as either grants or subsidized loans.

The aid (including financial, food, medicine/health care, etc.) provided by other countries in order to assist the country