



4-19-2016

Rising Tension in the South China Sea

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Rising Tension

In the

South China Sea

Paul McQuaid

Introduction

Tension in the South China Sea is rising. From disputes over islands, to drilling for natural resources, many states are in almost constant conflicts in Asia. The states in particular that will be discussed are: China, Japan and Taiwan. The United States will be discussed as well in regards to what the United States can do to help alleviate tension. With these topics in mind there will be four sections of this will be about the Asian actors (China, Japan and Taiwan), the second part will give real world examples, the third section will be about what the United States can do to alleviate tension, and the last section will deal with what could happen if nothing is done to relieve tension. The United States must help relieve tension to maintain the security for the United States and for Asia as a whole.

Why is the South China Sea so Important?

The South China Sea is located In Asia off the southern coast of China. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica the South China Sea is:

“It is bounded on the northeast by the Taiwan Strait (by which it is connected to the East China Sea); on the east by Taiwan and the Philippines; on the southeast and south by Borneo, the southern limit of the Gulf of Thailand, and the east coast of the Malay Peninsula; and on the west and north by the Asian mainland. The South China Sea and the East China Sea together form the China Sea. The southern boundary of the South China Sea is a rise in the seabed between Sumatra and Borneo, and the northern boundary stretches from the northernmost point of Taiwan to the coast of Fujian province, China, in the Taiwan Strait (LaFond, 2016).”

The area that this sea spans is 1,423,000 square miles (LaFond, 2016). This Sea is huge and borders many states, so it is no wonder why there are many conflicts in Asia.

The reasons that this sea is vital is because the South China Sea is an important trade route for ships, and there are natural resources at stake in the South China Sea as well. These resources are: oil, natural gas, and fishing (Xu, 2014). When it comes to oil and natural gas, the Council of Foreign Relations says:

“The South China Sea holds proven oil reserves of at least seven billion barrels and an estimated 900 trillion cubic feet of natural gas (Xu, 2014).”

With all these resources available, and in such large quantities, it becomes clear to see why the South China Sea is such a vital stretch of water.

Part One: Asian Actors

To understand why the states that are actively involved in the South China Sea are doing the things they are, information about the land, people and what natural resources are located in each country. From this, the argument for why each country is actively trying to control the South China Sea would be easy to make. The states that are going to be discussed are: China, Taiwan, and Japan.

China

Location	“Eastern Asia, bordering the East China Sea, Korea Bay, Yellow Sea, and South China Sea, between North Korea and Vietnam (CIA-China, 2016)”
Total Area:	9,596,960 sq km
Land area	9,326,410 sq km
Water area	270,550 sq km
Natural Resources	coal
Natural Resources	iron ore
Natural Resources	petroleum

Natural Resources	natural gas
Natural Resources	mercury
Natural Resources	tin
Natural Resources	tungsten
Natural Resources	antimony
Natural Resources	manganese
Natural Resources	molybdenum
Natural Resources	vanadium
Natural Resources	magnetite
Natural Resources	aluminum
Natural Resources	lead
Natural Resources	zinc
Natural Resources	rare earth elements
Natural Resources	uranium
Natural Resources	hydropower potential (world's largest)
Natural Resources	arable land
Military Expenditure	1.99% of GDP (2012)

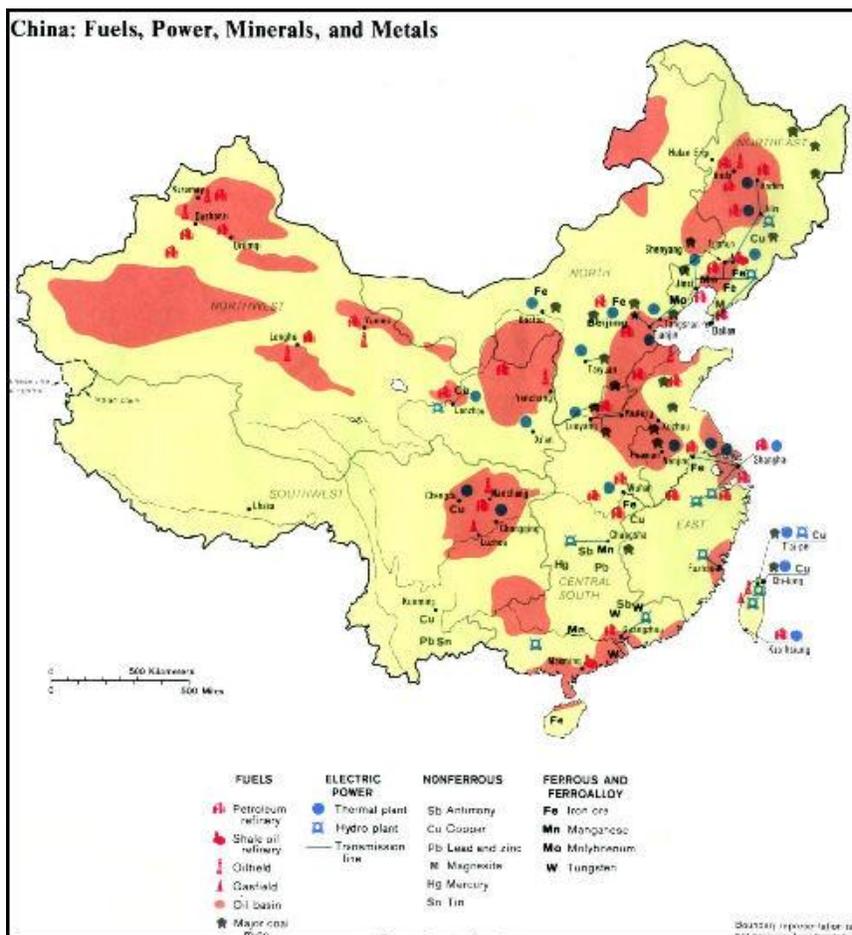
(CIA-China, 2016)

As can be seen, China has a large supply of natural resources. These resources however are not enough. China has over 1/7th of the world's population (CIA-China, 2016). With so many people, it is clear to see that China uses a large amount of its resources, and that they cannot keep up the use of these materials. They can, of course, import any resources they need, but this prevents them from being more independent. The South China Sea has a lot of resources that the Chinese could use (Xu, 2014). If they are able to build the bases that they are trying to build, then they would be one step closer to taking control of these resources.

Another reason that China is active in this region is also evident by the resources that are listed above. This reason is the fact that the Chinese need to expand in order to protect themselves. Out of every country in the Asian area, China has the most resources, and they

have the most to lose. If they were to get invaded and have a large supply of their resources taken, this could end up hurting China more than just a simple invasion could. If they lose their resources, the economy would grind to a halt. Part of their activity in the South China Sea is to protect their assets.

Looking at the picture below, it can be seen that the majority of China's resources are concentrated in the East. If any country invaded China via the South China Sea, they would have access to the majority of China's resources. By extending their military past their borders, it can be a way to either be an early alert to impending danger, or can directly and easily engage their enemies.



(China Tourists Maps, 2016)

Taiwan

Taiwan is a tiny island that China claims as part of its own territory. The Taiwanese government on the other land declare themselves as their own independent country. Their statistics go as following:

Population	23,415,126
Location	“Eastern Asia, islands bordering the East China Sea, Philippine Sea, South China Sea, and Taiwan Strait, north of the Philippines, off the southeastern coast of China (CIA-Japan, 2016).”
Total Area:	35,980 sq km
Land area	32,260 sq km
Water area	3,720 sq km
Natural Resources	small deposits of coal,
Natural Resources	natural gas
Natural Resources	limestone
Natural Resources	marble
Natural Resources	asbestos
Natural Resources	arable land
Military Expenditure	Unknown

(CIA-Taiwan, 2016)

Taiwan is not a very big state. Taiwan is a tiny island nation. The natural resources that they do have are not many. They rely on imports from other countries for supplies and resources that are crucially needed. They must act in the South China Sea because if they let China control the region, then they might not have the access to this trade that is their lifeline. China already wants to make Taiwan less independent. If China controls the trade, then they could bend Taiwan to their will. Taiwan wants to prevent this so they do what they can to oppose China. Even though China and Taiwan have been trying to build relations, this area is still a high tension area in their relationship.



(Das Brain, 2008)

As can be seen, Taiwan is small, therefore it cannot hold as many resources as China or other countries. Therefore it is a necessity to rely on imports.

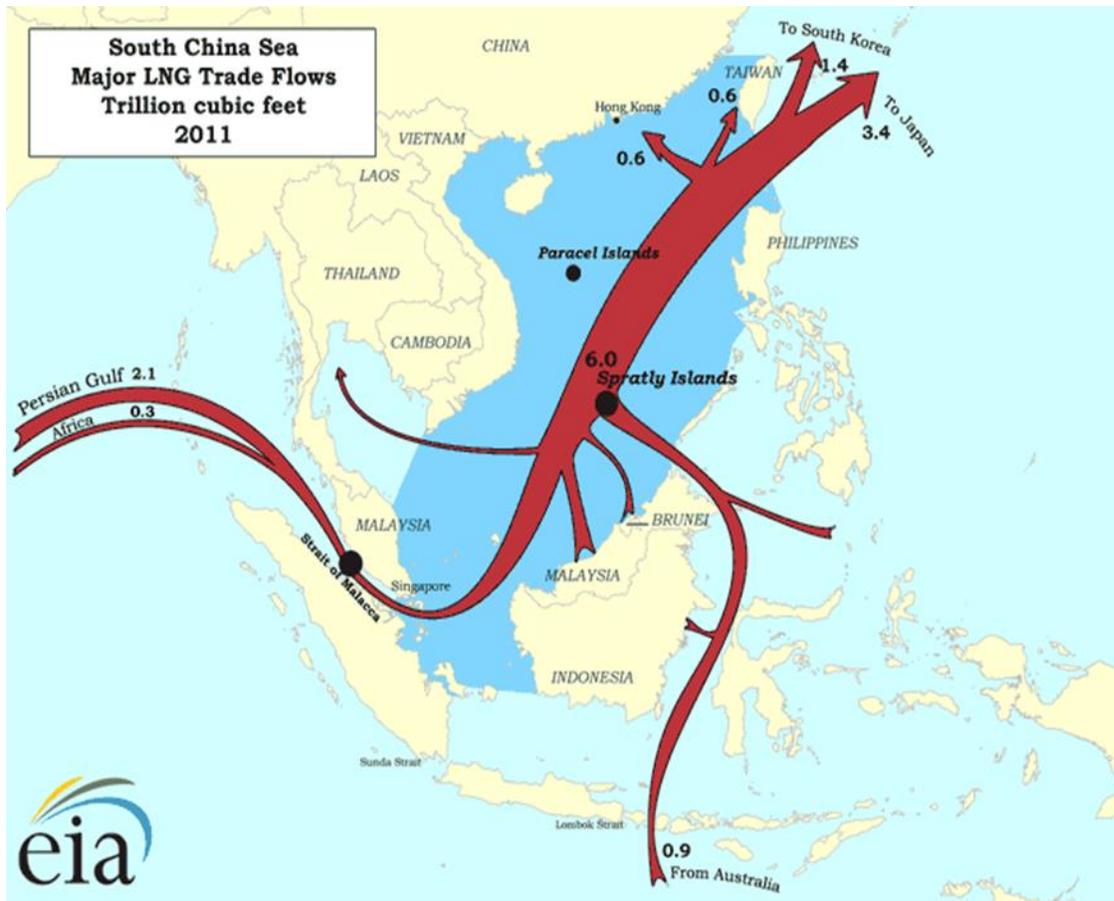
Japan

Population	126,919,659
Location	“Eastern Asia, island chain between the North Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Japan, east of the Korean Peninsula (CIA-Japan, 2016).”
Total Area:	377,915 sq km
Land area	364,485 sq km
Water area	13,430 sq km
Natural Resources	Few mineral resources
Natural Resources	Fish
Natural Resources	“Note: with virtually no natural energy resources, Japan is the world's largest importer of coal and liquefied natural gas, as well as the second largest importer of oil (CIA, 2016).”
Military Expenditure	0.97% of GDP (2012)

(CIA-Japan, 2016)

Japan is an island nation, much like Taiwan. Unlike Taiwan, Japan has very limited natural resources. As can be seen by the table above Japan has limited mineral resources. Not only that, but Japan is the biggest importer of coal and natural gas. They are also the second biggest importer of oil. Due to this Japan relies on the South China Sea for a lot of their shipping.

The picture below shows the trade routes of the South China Sea. As can be seen, the majority of the shipping goes to Japan. If China controls that sea, then they could dictate what went to Japan and how much would go to Japan. This could make Japan unable to carry out their day to day operations and possibly cause their economy to collapse.



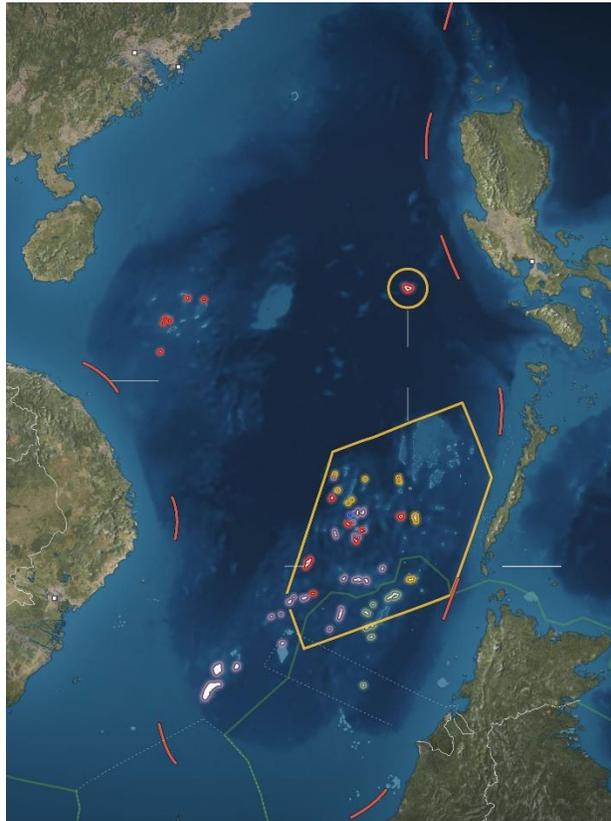
Another reason that Japan would want to be involved in the South China Sea is the fact that they would want to prevent China from becoming the Asian Hegemony. If they were able to become the hegemony for that area, then once again Japan could suffer due to either materials being stopped from reaching Japan, along with the fact that China could control the resources that lie under the sea bed.

Overall, this is the statistics that play an important role in figuring out why these three countries would want to be involved in the South China Sea. China wants to become the reigning superpower in the region, while both Taiwan and Japan would like to prevent China from being able to do this. These statistics help explain the tension that is going on, and the United States must keep this in mind when they try to relieve the tension in the area.

Real World Examples of Tension in the South China Sea

There are several examples that can be given to show the type of tension that goes on in the South China Sea. In this section, three will be given: one involving China, one involving Taiwan, and one involving Japan. This section is important because without seeing this tension in real examples, it becomes hard to understand. The three examples that will be discussed are: China building islands in the South China Sea, Taiwan laying claim to the Taiping Island, and “Japan heightening its profile in the South China Sea.” All three of these can show just how much tension is in this area.

For the past year or so, China has been building islands in the South China Sea. More specifically though, these islands are located within the Spratly Island chain. The picture below shows just where these islands are located in the South China Sea. As can be seen these Islands are pretty far away from mainland China. They are closer to Vietnam on the left, the Philippines, and Indonesia. According to the New York Times, these man-made islands “allow China to harness a portion of the sea for its own use that has been relatively out of reach until now.” This is significant because now they can use these islands for a variety of things, from fishing, to controlling the area.



(Watkins, 2015)

These islands were constructed during 2015. These islands were created to allow for a wider berth of air and sea patrols. While these islands are not big enough to allow for a large presence of military troops or vehicles, they can however, handle some air and watercraft (Watkins, 2015). An airstrip has been built on each of the islands, as well as small building meant for military purposes (Watkins, 2015). Now these islands are all different shapes, but what they have in common are: support building for the airstrip, harbor, docks, a cement plant, etc. Since most of the islands, if not all, have a landing strip, there can be several Chinese military planes in the area (Watkins, 2015). Below this paragraph is a picture of one of the islands that the Chines have constructed. It is clear to see why there is tension in the area caused by these

islands being built, but there are other reasons too why these islands are causing tension.



(Watkins, 2015)

The first reason that this is causing tension is the fact that China is expanding its reach much farther out than it ought to. In fact, according to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, a country can claim up to 200 miles off the shore for an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) (Hollis, 2013). This is a problem for these islands because they are more than 500 miles away from mainland China (Watkins, 2015). It can be seen, in the view of other states like Vietnam, the Philippines, and Indonesia, that China is trying to control areas that legally and rightfully belong to them.

The second reason that this is causing tension is due to the construction of the islands themselves. Due to the Chinese having to build up sediment to make these islands, lots of sediment got washed into the sea (Watkins, 2015). This causes the waters in the area to become loaded with sediment and other things, like oil and pollution from the vehicles used to make these islands (Watkins, 2015). All of these things can make the water harder to live in for the ocean life. Either many of the wildlife will die, or they move to other areas. The South China Sea is a rich area for fishing, and many States have fisherman that use the area to fish and supply

food for many people (Watkins, 2015). If the waters in this area become uninhabitable, then fishing will no longer be an option. This also causes tension in the area due to this threatening to these state's natural resources.

China has done many things to cause tension in the South China Sea. China building these islands however, is one of the most blatant ways China has tried to show that they control this region. Therefore it is no wonder that these islands have caused so much tension.

China is not the only state to cause tension in the region. Taiwan also has caused strife. Taiwan has laid claim to an island called Taiping Island (Lai, 2016). This has caused many states to become agitated due to this. This island is being heavily disputed right now. The Philippines are making the case that this island is just a rock (Lai, 2016). They are doing this so that way they would not have to share their Exclusive Economic Zone with Taiping. If it is just declared a rock then there would be no right to have an EEZ, because a rock cannot support human life, therefore, there is no need to be able to have large areas of water to obtain resources (Lai, 2016).



(Cole, 2014)

This is what the island looks like. As can be seen, Taiwan seems to have it right. This island appears to be more than just a rock.

One reason that states are irritated with Taiwan over them claiming this area has to do with the fact that they are over 1,200 miles away from this island that they lay claim to (Lai, 2016). If this island was closer to them, it might make it a little more reasonable for Taiwan to make a claim on this island. Due to them being so far away, it could be said that they are sticking their “noses” where it does not belong. In fact, another reason that these states are mad at Taiwan has to do with the fact that none of the states in the South China Sea region has diplomatic ties with Taiwan (Lai, 2016).

Due to the fact that China claims that Taiwan is just a province of the mainland no states has diplomatic ties with Taiwan. They recognize Mainland China as China proper. Therefore states might be a little worried that any island that Taiwan controls could, at some point, be taken over by the People’s Republic of China (mainland China) (Lai, 2016). This is why there is tension over Taiwan laying claims to the Taiping Island. Due to both of these reasons, it is clear to see that Taiwan, while not being able to play the biggest role in the South China Sea, is still there and causing problems for everyone in that area (Lai, 2016).

The last real world example comes has to do with Japan. Japan has now started interfering with the disputes that have been going on in the South China Sea. From what the prime minister has said, to the shifting of routes for its military planes, these things have caused tensions to flare up between China and Japan (Symonds, 2016).

When Japan’s prime minister issued the statement that Japan had:

“Very strong concerns over China’s unilateral attempt to change the status quo in the South China Sea ... Such a unilateral challenge against the international order cannot be tolerated, and the international community should raise its voice against this (Symonds, 2016).”

It made it clear that Japan was concerned about what was going on in the area. Not only that but it also upset China. China responded with a statement of their own saying that Japan should:

“Make more efforts to increase mutual trust ... instead of sowing discord” and warned that China was on “high alert” against any Japanese interference (Symonds, 2016).”

This high alert could mean a number of things. It could mean that if Japan gets too close to anything in the South China Sea that China might have a direct confrontation, i.e. harassing their ships or planes, or capturing them, etc. (Symonds, 2016). It could also mean that there could be economic ramifications to any interference by the Japanese (Symonds, 2016). China might put a halt on Japanese trading. In theory, anything could happen. In fact they might just be saying they are going on high alert, but end up doing nothing to stop the Japanese from interfering. This is one way that Japan is causing tensions to flare up in the South China Sea.

They are also causing tensions to flare up in another way. On January 10th, 2016 Japan started rerouting their military aircraft that was returning from Africa (Symonds, 2016). They had them land in Vietnam and the Philippines to gas up their planes. These planes carry technology that enables them to locate and track boats and submerged submarines (Symonds, 2016). The Chinese knew these planes were capable of carrying this technology, and they knew

that these military planes were indeed carrying this technology, so the Chinese were getting very upset. They knew that the Japanese were using this technology to track the Chinese military watercraft while they flew over the South China Sea to get back to Japan (Symonds, 2016). This causes tension because the Chinese feel that they are being spied upon, and that they cannot perform any maneuvers in the South China Sea without the Japanese being able to directly see it, and then call the Chinese out on it. These two ways are how the Japanese are causing tension to rise in the area.

Overall, these three examples are enough to show how China, Taiwan and Japan cause tensions to rise in the South China Sea. From building islands for military purposes, to claiming an island 1,200 miles away is theirs, to even spying on the Chinese Navy, it becomes apparent that something needs to be done. This is why it is extremely important that the United States gets involved in this region to help maintain peace and prosperity for the region. This is the next topic: what can the United States do to help decrease tension in the area?

What can the United States do to relieve the tensions?

The United States has vital interests in the Asian region. Over the past twenty years Asia has been growing in importance. China has been growing faster and faster and has now turned into a major player. China and the United States also do not have the best relationship in the world right now. This is one reason the United States has interests in the region: they want to prevent the Chinese from growing even stronger and becoming a hegemony. Not only that but the United States also has treaties with Japan where if they get attacked, then the United States most likely have to get involved. This is a situation that the

United States would rather not have to deal with, which is a long drawn out conflict. The way that the United States could relieve tension is: help set up better communication between militaries (including the United States' military), help resolve territorial disputes, encourage mutual economic growth, and finally strengthen Japan and other allies to help counter China. All these can help make the tension dissipate.

The first thing that the United States could do is to help setup better communication between militaries and the states themselves (Haas, 2016). This could help this area immensely. This would make it so that if there were any accidents, then those in charge could be reached (Haas, 2016). An example of an accident would be if, let's say, a Japanese military maneuver came too close to the Chinese mainland due to an error in reading instruments, or a malfunction in the instruments, then a quick phone call can be made and the leaders of Japan could explain what happened. This could help relieve the tension by preventing an armed conflict because China could be thinking that Japan was doing this intentionally. With the phone system in place, the Chinese could go out to them and peacefully help repair any instruments that were broken, and even assist them in getting back to Japan. This would help the United States as well because if the United States' military was ever needed by any of the states in the region, or if the United States makes a mistake, then they can be called and notified too. Overall, this could be a good way to help make tension dissipate because if there could be a direct line to the leaders of the states in this region, then armed conflicts would not be as much of a problem.

The second way that the United States could lessen tensions in the South China Sea is to help resolve the territorial disputes in the South China Sea. As mentioned above in the

previous section, China has been building islands 1,200 miles away from their land. This is not allowed due to the United Nation's ruling on the laws of the sea. China will be pretty unwilling to fully back off of the South China Sea, due to them not wanting to appear weak. If, however, a compromise could be worked out so that everybody wins China might be more willing to participate. The United States could act as the neutral arbitrator and work out a compromise (Glaser, 2016). A compromise that the United States could come up with is having China create islands farther away from the Spratly Islands, and closer to China. That way China still has outposts in the South China Sea, but they would be farther away from Vietnam and the Philippines. This would help relieve tension because the Vietnamese and Philippines would no longer feel that China is infringing on their territory, and China would still have their outposts where they could feel they could still patrol, and could be far enough away from the mainland that they could still adequately provide warnings if there are any problems. This would be one major way to removing tensions that is partly caused by territorial disputes in the area.

The United States could also encourage economic cooperation in regards to growing the region's economies (Glaser, 2016). If the states in the region started cooperating and their economies started growing, it could be a wake-up call to them that instead of arguing and fighting, and could possibly encourage growth in other ways. This economic growth could encourage political cooperation as well. In fact, it could lead to an organization similar to the European Union. This could help strengthen the region by promoting peace and prosperity by economic cooperation leading to political cooperation. Now there is already an organization named ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), but this has not been a strong enough group, nor does include China and Japan (ASEAN, 2016). There needs to be a group, which the

United States could start, and be a member of until it gets going and can run on its own, where one state cannot dictate what goes on, nor can they just leave if it is not going the way that they want it to. There needs to be more accountability, and the group needs to include Japan and China as well so that way, when there are disputes the group can take care of it. This is another way that the United States can reduce tension in the South China Sea. By promoting economic cooperation, which could in turn lead to political cooperation, tension could be relieved from the South China Sea.

The last method that will be discussed is the method of building up Japan's military (Glaser, 2016). Now it is written in Japan's constitution that they are not allowed to have a military. What they call their military is called the National Defense Force (Marcus, 2015). This however is just a name, the Japanese are basically a militarized state (Marcus, 2015). This is not enough though to stand up to China, who has more resources and more men for their military. If the United States can help build up the Japanese forces, then they could stand up better to the Chinese. If the Chinese know that they cannot just walk over any other states, then the Chinese might become hesitant in making any decisions that could upset Japan or any other state. Due to another state that could confront them, equally, it could also make China more willing to come to the negotiation tables to solve their problems. Once they start negotiating, things could get solved better and faster, instead of just having stand offs, or just letting China walk over everyone else. Once things start getting solved, tensions would start to be relieved because the problems would be getting solved. To bolster the Japanese military the United States could do a variety of things. They could train the Japanese military, they can sell weapons to the Japanese at a reduced rate so the Japanese could have even more weapons

and vehicles, among other things. There is a negative to this aspect as well though. If the Chinese decide not to back down, it could just escalate the situation into a more hostile situation. While this is a possibility, it is still worth the risk because at least there would be another state in the region that could stand up to China and possibly prevent them from becoming a regional hegemony.

All these things are ways the United States could do to help relieve the tension that has been plaguing this region for many years. These are just four of the ways that the United States could do to relieve tension, there are many more. None of these ways are guaranteed to work but it is worth trying because if they succeed in relieving the tension, this area could see a time of peace that could help all states in this region to prosper. Without the United States relieving the tension, there are many things that could happen. The last section of this paper will talk about the things that could happen if the tension is not relieved.

What could happen if the tension is not relieved?

The question of what could happen if the tension is not mitigated is an important one to consider. When considering this, there are many scenarios that have the possibility of happening. They range from nothing happening, and the tension just going away, to all-out war. The scenarios that will be covered will be: the tension relieving itself, trade routes being closed by increased aggression, and lastly, the possibility of all-out war. Through the discussion of these three conflicts, it can be understood the range of scenarios that can occur.

The first scenario that will be discussed is that the tension could relieve itself and effectively go away. This is a possibility because this has happened many times. Through the

course of history, especially after the Second World War, there has been waves of tension that has come and gone. In fact, it could be considered that this coming and going of tension is a global epoch. A global epoch is

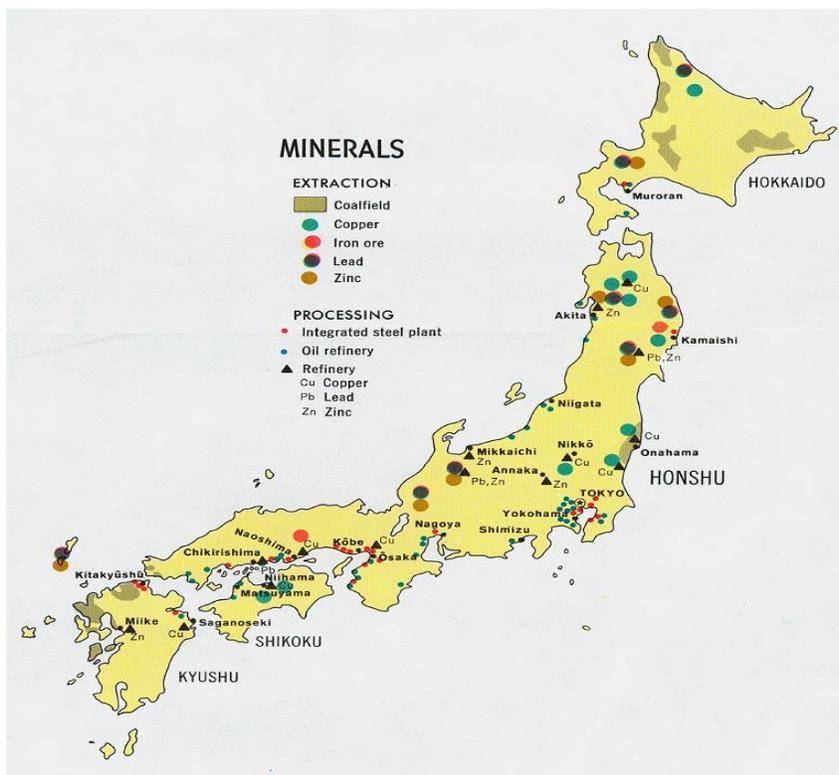
*“A particular period of time marked by distinctive features, events, etc
(www.dictionary.com, 2016).”*

The epoch here is the fact that something causes the tension to increase to a point where armed conflict seems like it is all but imminent, and then eventually the tension fades and goes away for a while. After a period of time passes tension starts building again. For the past hundred or so years this has been the case. There has been one major exception to this trend. This exception was World War Two. With this, there was a great amount of tension that built up. All of Asia was a powder keg waiting to go off. Unfortunately this time, it did not dissipate like usual, it instead exploded into all-out war, when Japan invaded Manchukuo (US department of State, 2016). This war however, was the outlier in the trend of what has been going on since the end of the Opium wars. There is no reason to believe that this would not happen now, but that does not mean that all the other scenarios are not going to happen, nor are they the least likely ones to occur. Everything needs to be analyzed and taken into account when trying to come up with plans that could help ease the tension. The fact that this course has happened time after time, still does not mean others scenarios cannot happen.

The next scenario that will be addressed is the closing of trade routes by states that are near to them. These trade routes are extremely important, not only to the states in Asia, but for all states that have an interest in Asia, I.e. the United States, Persian Gulf, etc. Without access

to these trade routes, economies will start to take a hit. Some states that rely on these trade routes for money and to export their goods will be aggravated by whomever is closing off the routes. Japan is the one who has to rely on the import of many goods. Japan is a small nation that does not have a large supply of natural resources (University of Texas, 2011). They do not have any other choice than to import from other countries. With trade routes closed they would not be able to get the supplies they would need to meet their demand for them.

The map below shows the natural resource distribution of Japan:

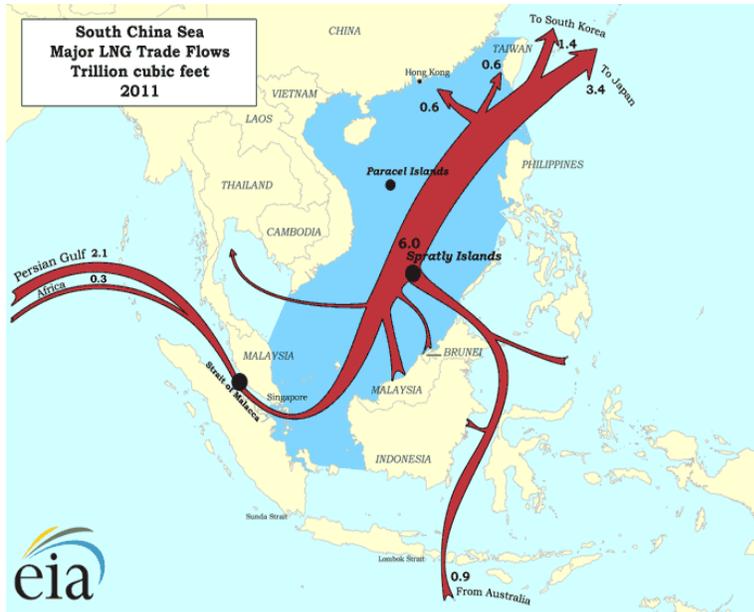


(University of Texas, 2011)

As can be seen by the map above, the majority of natural resources that are needed to keep their industry running, which in turn keeps their economy from crashing, is missing on the map (University of Texas, 2011). Since they do not have these resources (oil, iron to make steel),

they must need other countries to send these resources to them. This is just an example of how countries are relying on these trade routes.

The map below shows the trade routes that are used to send goods and resources to the different states in Asia. By looking at the map, it can be noted that the state that receives the most amount of goods is Japan (US Energy Information Administration, 2013). In 2011 Japan received three and a half trillion cubic feet of goods and resources. Japan is more than double that of the second highest receiver of exports, South Korea. China, including Taiwan, come in third with only about one and a fifth trillion cubic feet of goods being imported in (US Energy Information Administration, 2013). While it is important to consider who receives the imports, it is also necessary to analyze who is exporting these goods to these states. The majority of these exports come from within East Asia itself, but some come Africa and Australia and a good amount comes from the Persian Gulf. If a state, due to an opposing force upsetting it, decides it wants to close down all trade routes in the South China Sea, many states would be negatively affected by this. So much so, that they might be willing to take up arms to clear up the trade routes.



(US Energy Information Administration, 2013)

An example of how a state might react if trade was ended took place once again in World War Two. Before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States imposed a trade embargo on Japan. As a result, the Japanese launched an attack on the United States, which threw the United States into the conflict (History Channel, 2016). Another state that could end up shutting down trade routes would be China. Out of all the states in the region, China is the only one that would stand to gain from the shutting down of these routes. China does not rely on these routes as much as the other states do. Not only that, but if they shut down the trade routes, they can control what was allowed in and out of this area. This would frustrate many of the Asian states, and would allow more tension to build up, with the end most likely being an armed conflict breaking out. The other way this could play out is that China gains all the power, and bends them to China's will. This would result in China becoming the regional hegemony power in Asia. The definition of a hegemony is:

"Preponderant influence or authority over others (Merriam-Webster, 2016)."

This would be bad for the United States because then the United States would have to deal primarily with China, and they would lose power in Asia.

The last situation that will be discussed is the possibility of all-out war. This situation is the worst one that could happen. When the tension starts to build, militaries will start to receive more funds to build up their armies and to gain more advanced weaponry to help their side. In most cases this tension would fizzle out and not much would be done. Sometimes, however, the tension can lead into all-out war. This has happened a few times in the past century. One example of this happening is when North Korea invaded South Korea. There was so much tension building up between the two states that all of a sudden, war broke out. This is relevant to keep in mind because this could happen again. That so much tension could be there between two or more states that in a blink of an eye they are killing each other. This could happen again. Japan and China have had a lot of tension between them. They are constantly squabbling over territories and other things that it would not take much for these interactions to escalate into a war. This does not seem like the most likely scenario, but it is one that the United States must keep in mind when trying to deescalate situations that are arising in the region. Inevitably the United States would get drawn into any war that would occur in the area. This is due to the fact that the United States has a security alliance with Japan (Xu, 2014). Basically, any war that the Japanese get involved with, the United States would get dragged into. This is due to the fact that Japan is a strong, and necessary ally for the Americans (Xu, 2014). Overall, while war may not be a likely scenario, but it is one that must be planned for.

In conclusion, there are many scenarios that could happen if tension is not relieved in the South China Sea. They range from mild scenarios, to worse scenarios, to the worst scenarios.

The ones that were discussed above are just some of the many examples. Each one varies in the intensity of it, with the tension building and then being relieved on its own is the best case scenario, while all-out war is one of the worst case scenarios.

Conclusion

Looking at the main actors in the South China Sea, it can be seen why each of them are doing the things they are. From needing the resources that is buried under the South China Sea, to wanting to make islands to show their dominance, it is clear why there is so much tension in the region. If this area is to continue to grow and peace is going to last, it is important for the tension to be removed. Recently the United States has pivoted its focus to this region. This is because the United States has vital interests in the region. To protect these interests it is extremely important for the United States to get involved and help alleviate these tensions. If these tensions are not removed a multitude of things could happen, from trade routes being blocked all the way up to war, in South China Sea needs to be alleviated and the United States must do something to help alleviate said tension.

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