

# South China Sea dispute



Rúnar Haraldsson

# Territorial claims



*China and Taiwan*   *Malaysia*   *Vietnam*   *Brunei*   *Philippines*

# The South China Sea and its importance

Around  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the world's maritime shipping goes through the area

Carrying an annual worth of around 3.4 (5.3) trillion USD

Vital fishing grounds for an increasing population of South-East Asian countries

Recent research missions suggest a vast amount of natural resources beneath the seabed

China relies heavily on the trading routes as 80% of China's energy import and 40% of total import goes through the South China Sea



# Regional players

Of those countries that have territorial claims to the South China Sea the most notable are:

China

Vietnam

Philippines

Malaysia

Brunei

Other regional countries/territories include: Taiwan, Indonesia, Singapore

# Other Major players

## United States

The US historically has shown heavy involvement in the area, and their presence only increases with further development

## Japan

Japan lacks natural resources and therefore trust on international and intercontinental trade for most of its energy needs

## Australia

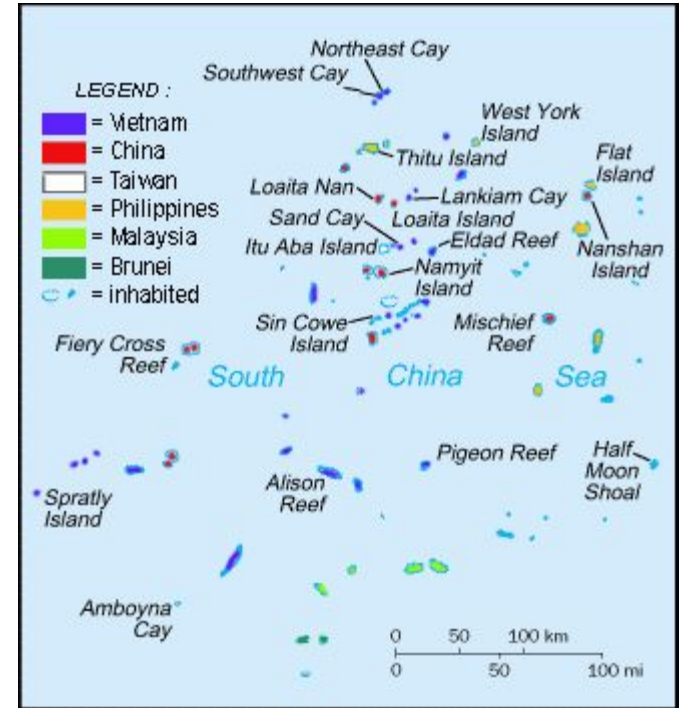
As a western-centered country the Australian government can not change the fact that their geographical position is bound to spark some disputes with other countries in the region

# Spratly Islands

The Spratly Islands are a cluster of islands in the South China Sea

The islands are claimed by different countries in the region

This complicates territorial claims as EEZ is supposed to extend 200 miles from shore, as long as it does not class with another countries EEZ





# Alliances in the region

China has territorial claims that overlap with claims from every other country in the area

China's increasing naval presence force smaller players to form alliances of some sort

Some of which search outside of Asia for support





U.S. and Chinese Capabilities  
in 2000, 2016, and 2030<sup>97</sup>

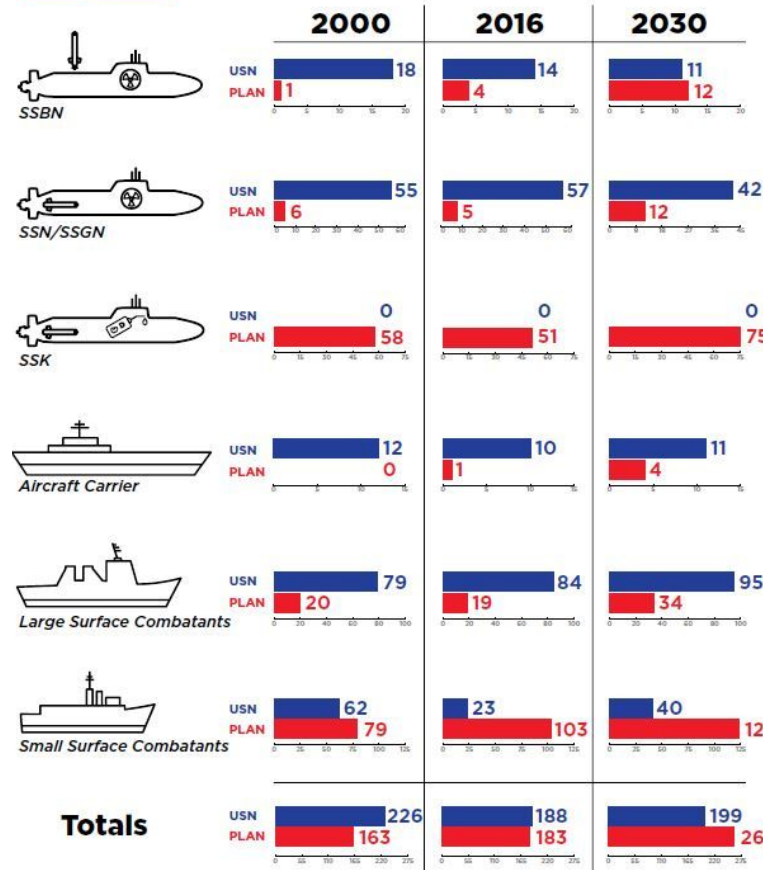


# Tensions between China and the US

While China builds a stronger naval fleet tensions seem at an all time high

China has threatened to sink US Navy's aircraft carriers and ram US vessels in the contested areas

China even went so far as to build replicas of US Navy's ship just to practice sinking them



<sup>97</sup>Large Surface Combatants are defined as cruisers and destroyers.  
<sup>98</sup>Small Surface Combatants are defined as frigates, LCSs, and mine warfare ships.  
<sup>99</sup>SSBN- nuclear powered ballistic missile submarine  
<sup>100</sup>SSGN- nuclear powered guided missile submarine  
<sup>101</sup>SSN- nuclear powered attack submarine  
<sup>102</sup>SSK- diesel powered submarine

# Possibilities of military conflicts

The South China Sea is by many believed to be one of the most likely area for a future war/ heated dispute

The US armed forces regularly show their power by controversially sailing their aircraft carriers and other armed vessels in contested waters

Conflicts are cold for now but with an increased amount of heated classes between the superpowers the tension is rising

# Political landscape and different emphasis on peace

Smaller countries in the area seek for some sort of a peace treaty as they are not capable of matching China's military power

China does not have the need for peace

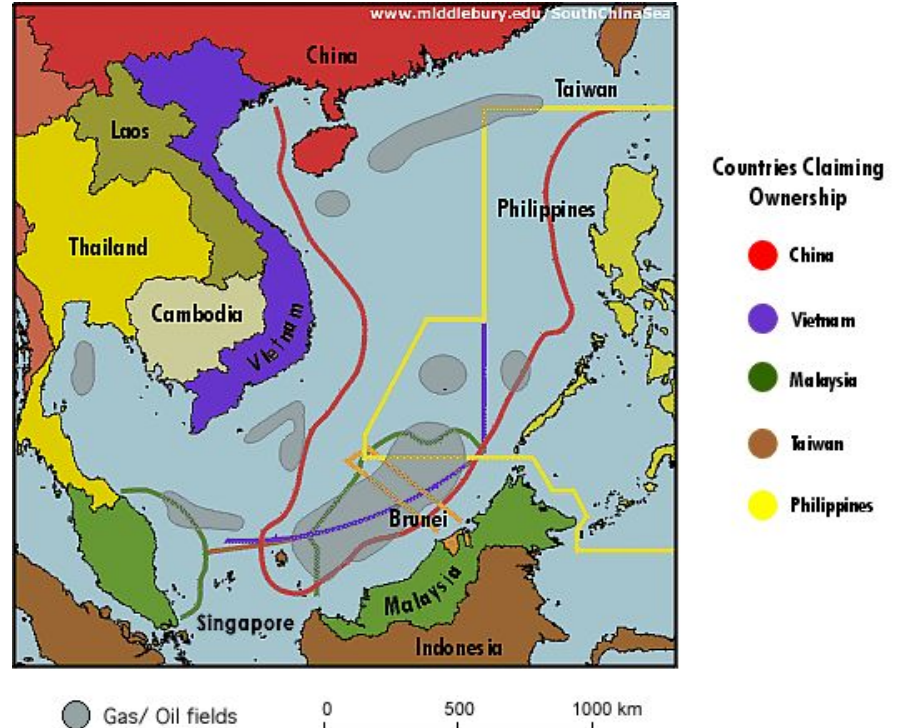
Singapore does not have territorial claims in the region and therefore trusts in a stable political climate to ensure its interests

# Natural resources in the South China sea

Proven natural resources in the seabed further complicate the matter as most of them are claimed by two or more countries

Chinese companies testing for oil/gas reserves often cross other countries territorial claims

With increased Chinese military presence it is hard to stand in China's way



# Tension following Russia's invasion in Ukraine

After the recent invasion in Ukraine it is safe to say that tensions regarding Taiwan will rise

China has observed sanctions implemented on Russia whilst not seeing a great military invention by neighboring countries

Historically sanctions and tax wars by the west towards China have not been successful as western countries are heavily reliant on import and Chinese manufacturing

# Likely development in coming years

It is most likely that further development in the region will consist of more heated classes between China and its neighboring countries as well as the US

Taiwan remains an unsolved issue

Russia's invasion in Ukraine might escalate China's intention to invade Taiwan

Future development regarding natural resources might as well spark some conflicts

# Sources:

BBC. Why is the South China Sea contentious?. July 12, 2016. Accessed March 30, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-13748349?piano-modal>.

China Power Team. How Much Trade Transits the South China Sea? China Power. August 2, 2017. Updated January 25, 2021. Accessed April 2, 2022. <https://chinapower.csis.org/much-trade-transits-south-china-sea/>

Lockie, Alex. China sets the stage for a 'bloody nose' attack on US aircraft carriers, but it would backfire horribly. January 11, 2019. Accessed April 2, 2022. <https://www.businessinsider.com/chinas-threats-to-attack-us-aircraft-carriers-would-backfire-horribly-2019-1>

Marshall, Tim. Power of geography: Ten maps that reveal the future of Our World. New York: Scribner, 2016.

Marshall, Tim. Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps That Explain Everything about the World. New York: Scribner, 2016.

McGleenon, Brian. South China Sea: Beijing escalating tensions as ASEAN countries fear renewed violations. express.co.uk. October 29, 2019. Accessed April 1, 2022. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1196922/south-china-sea-beijing-spratly-islands-cardio-asean-sea-code-of-conduct>

United Nations. PART V - EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. [https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/texts/unclos/part5.htm](https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/part5.htm)