South China Sea: The Rise of Technology and Security Dynamics

Background Guide
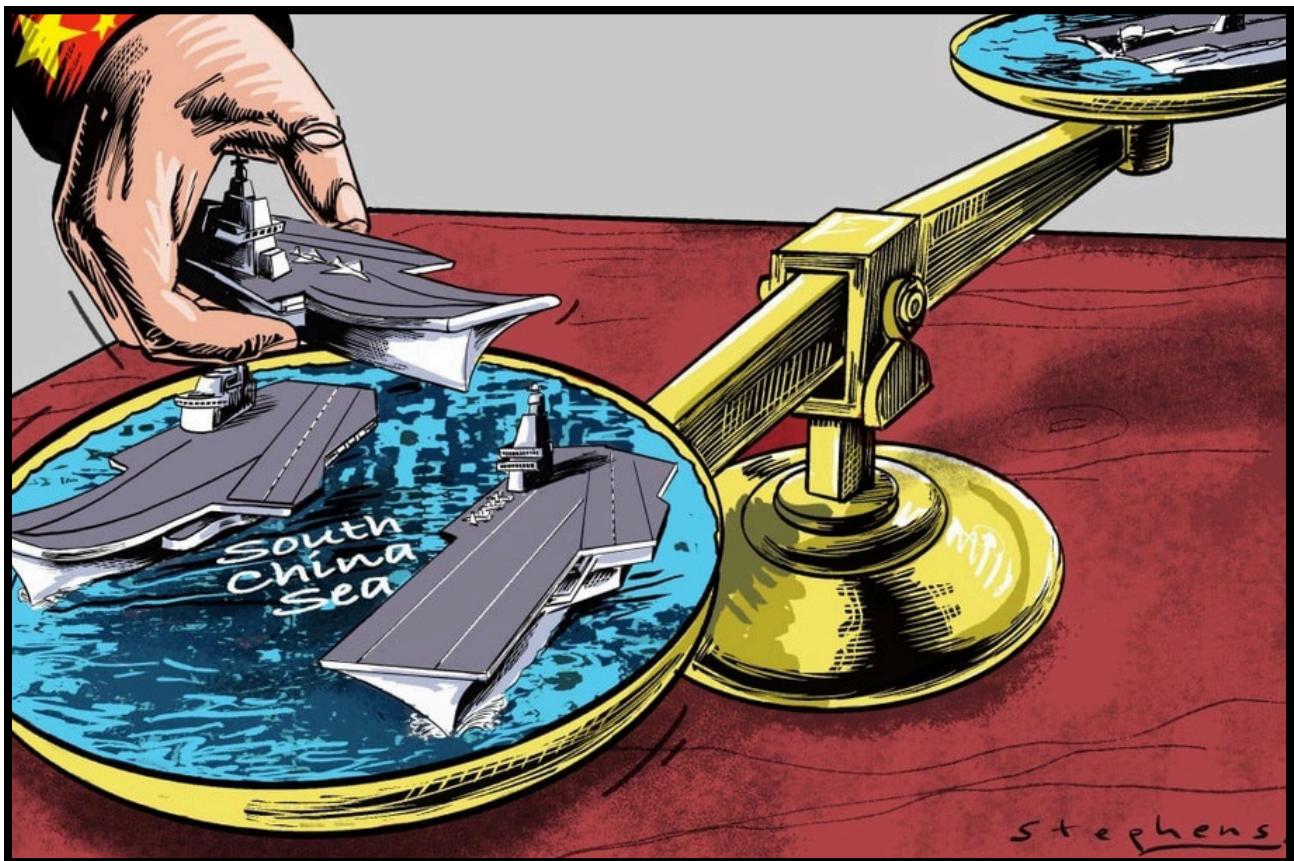
Chairs: Brett Berlin & Abigale Giordano

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Letter from the Chair

Hello Delegates!

My name is Brett Berlin, and I will be one of your chairs for this amazing weekend. I hope you are all excited to completely immerse yourself this weekend and I cannot wait to see what you all do. A little bit about myself; I am a senior here at Seton Hall University and am currently the President of our Model UN club. I have competed for the past three years, and this will be my second year helping to chair a SHUMUN committee. I am also involved in our school's radio station and will be attending Rutgers law school starting next fall.

As I have said before, I am super excited to see how you all compete this weekend. With such an interesting situation that is happening in the South China Sea, there is a lot we are going to talk about during the weekend. Make sure that you enjoy yourselves this weekend and remember to have fun and truly immerse yourself in your role.

Best regards,

Brett Berlin

brett.berlin@student.shu.edu

Letter from the Vice-Chair

Hello everyone,

My name is David Gelfand, and I am excited to be vice-chairing the South China Sea Committee this weekend. A little bit about myself: I graduated in December but agreed to stay on for one last SHUMUN. This is my fourth year participating in the conference and third year chairing. I was previously the treasurer of Seton Hall's Model UN club. I was involved as an editor of the University's Political Science journal, and a member of both the history and political science honor societies. Outside of school, I enjoy hiking, kayaking, cooking, and travelling.

As my fellow chair Brett has mentioned, this will be a fun weekend, full of debate, writing, and collaboration. The South China Sea Dispute is a very popular and perplexing topic in International Relations. It is my hope that you will all come to the table with curiosity and a willingness to learn. I guarantee that you will all emerge as stronger and wiser delegates after this weekend. Remember to challenge yourself but have fun and make new friends. I am rooting for you!

Sincerely,

David Gelfand

david.gelfand@student.shu.edu

Notes on Procedure

1. SHUMUN will be utilizing Google Docs and Gmail for the conference. For any questions contact our email: shumun.sec@gmail.com. Delegates will communicate in-room with paper notes.

2. SHUMUN uses Parliamentary Procedure (often abbreviated as Parli Pro) to run committees. A Google search will give you more than enough information on how this is used in Model UN, and any other questions can easily be addressed in committee.

3. SHUMUN has a **zero-tolerance policy regarding bullying, offensive remarks, harassment, discrimination, or anything of the sort.** Model UN should be a fun activity for delegates to participate in and no one should feel excluded at any point during the weekend. If at any point the Senior Secretariat is notified of any violation of this policy, the delegate and advisor will be contacted and the issue will be discussed, potentially resulting in expulsion from the conference or disqualification from awards. In general, if you think even for a second that something would offend someone, do not do, or say that thing.

4. **Position papers are required for General Assembly Committees.** You can find your chair's email on the website and in the background guides of each committee. Position Papers will be accepted until the beginning of Committee Session 1 on February 7th. Failure to turn in position papers will hurt awarding prospects. **For South China Sea, please email position papers to the chairs** brett.berlin@student.shu.edu and abigale.giordano@student.shu.edu**.**

5. Profanity is prohibited.

6. Pre-writing is defined as any notes or directives written outside of committee time and is strictly prohibited. Delegates are allowed to bring research into the committee, but not pre-written notes or papers. Engaging in pre-writing will result in immediate disqualification from award consideration.

7. **Technology is only permitted during unmoderated caucuses or at the discretion of the chair.** Research must be done prior to the beginning of committee sessions. Any usage of cell phones or laptops in the committee is grounds for disqualification.

8. If you need to use the restroom during committee, you do not need to raise your hand or ask permission.

9. The session will begin with a roll call followed by a primary speakers list to debate which topic will be discussed. Delegates will then vote on the motion to set the agenda after the chair decides enough debate has been conducted. After the agenda is set, a secondary speakers list will be created and delegates will have the opportunity to present motions at the chair's discretion.

Background

The South China Sea is located within the Pacific Ocean and mostly has large rock structures, reefs, and uninhabitable islands such as the Paracel and Spratly Islands. While the People's Republic of China (PRC), has stated to have had claim to this area for centuries, this bold claim would not check out historically. Dating back to 1899, officials of the Qing dynasty would deny ownership of this area during an insurance dispute following a shipwreck, and even in 1933, some senior officials in China were unaware of the existence of the Spratly islands [1].

While China may have denied claim over the area in the past, there were three diplomatic issues that occurred which led to China officially being recognized as the ruling body of what is now the South China Sea. The first issue occurred in 1909 which involved a dispute between Japan and the Qing Empire. With Japan approving development on an island located near the Paracel islands and Hong Kong, China stepped in and asserted that no development can occur as this area belonged to the dynasty [2]. The second issue occurred in 1933 between French officials and Chinese officials. During this time, a territorial dispute arose between them and in this moment, Chinese officials asserted claim to the Spratly islands [3]. The final issue occurred between 1946-48 in which the government of China laid formal claim to the Spratly islands, marking them on official maps and including them within the nation's borders [4].

China's claim to these islands have held up and over time, they have developed the islands into military bases with the South China Sea serving as a major trading route. With China

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[1] Hayton, Bill. The South China Sea: Historical and legal background. Page 3
https://www.geostrategy.org.uk/app/uploads/2024/09/No.-2024_27-%E2%80%93-The-South-China-Sea_-Historical-and-legal-background.pdf.

[2] Hayton, Bill. The South China Sea: Historical and legal background. Page 3
[3] Hayton, Bill. The South China Sea: Historical and legal background. Page 3
[4] Hayton, Bill. The South China Sea: Historical and legal background. Page 3-4

believing they have the right to this area, despite a United Nations Convention on the Law of the

Sea (UNCLOS) decision in 2016 that established that there is no single ruler to these islands and

the area surrounding them, China has ignored international law and continues to do so [5]. While

sovereignty over the South China Sea remains disputed, China maintains its conviction that the

region falls under its exclusive jurisdiction. Considering that the South China Sea is home to

critical trade routes and that many international water disputes have arisen in the past, will a

serious dispute in the future lead to a collapse in the global economy or further conflict?

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[5] Hayton, Bill. The South China Sea: Historical and legal background. Page 6

Topic A: AI Chip Movement in the South China Sea

With the rapid increase of interest in artificial intelligence (AI) taking the world by storm, companies and countries alike are making sure they can keep up with the times and integrate AI into their products. With many products having AI integrated within them, AI chips are an important factor in making sure they have this capability. Unlike traditional processors, these chips are engineered to handle the intensive computational demands of machine learning. These chips allow for integrated AI learning, an iterative 'trial and error' process that allows the system to refine its performance and improve its execution of programmed tasks. The main producer of these AI chips is a company located in Taiwan. Taiwan maintains independent and autonomous administration while China maintains its claim of sovereignty over the island. Taiwan is located off the coast of China with direct access to the South China Sea. With the sea serving as a central trading hub for many countries, the exports of these chips happen right in the middle of a conflicted area. Considering the growing demand for chips and the tension in the South China Sea, this is where this committee's current situation arises.

The growing demand for AI chips adds to the current state of the South China Sea. With Taiwan being a prime exporter of chips, the 164 billion dollars Taiwan makes from these chips uses the waterways located within the sea [6]. With this demand increasing, this leads to the situation of militarization and competition within the region. Competition for these chips have created issues that have arisen between the United States and China. In 2022, tech restrictions were set by the United States on China which restricted the manufacturing of AI chips to China

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[6] Chang, Rachel. "From Chips to beyond: Taiwan's Need for Economic Diversification." Growth Lab, October 3, 2025.
https://growthlab.hks.harvard.edu/chips-beyond-taiwans-need-economic-diversification/#:~:text=Taiwan%20is%20the%20leading%20producer.powers%20the%20world's%20digital%20infrastructure.

for companies that rely on US tools.[7] This restriction resulted in China having to rely on other means to receive chips as a majority of the factories within Taiwan rely on US tools. This also creates tension between allies of the US and China as the US would create means to prevent China from receiving a tool they need for producing goods. Aside from this tension between the US and China, the militarization of the South China Sea by China creates tension among all countries that utilize the waterway. China has laid claim to the sea and in doing so has made efforts to modernize and militarize the islands. China has made sure to establish a military presence within the region by expanding existing islands and creating new ones. For instance, China has established a base around the Woody Islands where they have deployed fighter jets, missiles, and radar systems [8]. By creating military outposts within these islands, China directly threatens the freedom of trade that occurs within the South China Sea. If a country is conducting a normal route and accidentally steers off-course and into the space of one of these outposts, China may potentially see the vessel as a threat. The uncertainty of China's actions creates tension among the countries that utilize the South China Sea. With no international recognition that China is the claimant to this region, it could lead to a dangerous international crisis if an accident ever happened.

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[7] Chang, Rachel. "From Chips to beyond: Taiwan's Need for Economic Diversification." Growth Lab, October 3, 2025.

[8] "Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea | Global Conflict Tracker." Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed December 29, 2025. https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/territorial-disputes-south-china-sea.

Questions to Consider

- How can states focus on national security and technological innovation?

- Should AI chips be regulated with their own set of rules/principles?

- What role should international organizations play when it comes to the situation in the South China Sea?

- How can smaller states protect themselves with such key players in competition with each other?

- How can states maintain peace, navigate conflict, and still promote economic growth in the South China Sea?

Topic B: Drone Usage Within the South China Sea

The economic and military importance of the South China Sea justifies a degree of surveillance by its bordering states as goods and resources, such as oil, food, and technology, vital to the global economy, constantly travel throughout the sea. As China continues to militarize neighboring islands, Chinese surveillance capabilities have similarly developed in the sea. At three of the bases, China has deployed antennas with long-range jamming and date collection capabilities [9]. While this technology applies to military bases, it establishes the use of surveillance technology in the region. This in turn relates to the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), better known as drones. A drone is a type of aircraft that is remotely controlled by an operator or pilot from a different location.[10] Their use ranges from domestic information and surveillance purposes to foreign military operations. They have become a way for a country to monitor their goods and gather information on other countries. With peace and security being a top global priority, this is where the current situation of drones in the South China Sea arises. Is drone usage justified by countries or are there greater implications for how countries will respond to others surveilling them?

China and the United States are the leading 'drone powers' in the South China Sea. China's fleet is the largest out of any bordering states and has significant destructive capabilities.[11] The largest issues that concern drone use are surveillance and reconnaissance as well as drone warfare. Their presence creates a degree of uncertainty because the exact intentions of China's surveillance and patrolling are not fully understood. They can lead to a heightened

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[9] Frances Mangosing. "China Boosts Surveillance over Spratly Islands, Says Us Think Tank." August 12, 2025. https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2025/12/china-boosts-surveillance-over-spratly-islands-says-us-think-tank/.

[10] Fan Bangkui, et al. "Review on the Technological Development and Application of UAV Systems," *Chinese Journal of Electronics* 29, no. 2 (2020): 199. DOI:10.1049/cje.2019.12.006

[11] Lasha Tchantouridzé. "Campaigns and Drones: Maritime Security in the South China Sea," *Security Science Journal* 6, No. 1 (2025): 14-15. https://doi.org/10.37458/ssj.6.1.1

security dilemma between China and other countries involved in the dispute. A conflict arises

between national security and sovereignty rights between states that use drones.

Questions to Consider

- Should the specific application of drones be codified into international law?

- What kind of laws should be enacted to regulate the use of drones?

- What measures can be permitted in confronting drones if they enter another country's airspace?

- Should military and intelligence drones be allowed at all in the South China Sea?

Positions

- United States of America (USA)
- People's Republic of China (PRC)
- Republic of China (Taiwan)
- Japan
- South Korea
- Philippines
- Malaysia
- Singapore
- Brunei
- Indonesia
- Vietnam
- Cambodia
- Thailand
- Laos
- Myanmar
- Australia
- New Zealand
- United Kingdom
- Germany
- France
- Canada
- Russia
- India
- Mexico
- Brazil
- Argentina
- Colombia
- Kazakhstan
- Nigeria
- South Africa
- Poland
- Egypt
- Pakistan
- Kenya
- Iran
- Algeria
- Spain
- Bangladesh
- Sri Lanka
- Chile
- Peru
- The Netherlands
- Denmark
- Finland

- Sweden
- Norway
- Switzerland
- Ireland
- Saudi Arabia
- United Arab Emirates

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IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA." Security Science Journal 6, no. 1 (2025): 7-18.