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The South China Sea A Dangerous Ground

Henry J. Kenny

WHILE THE FOCUS OF RECENT AMERICAN security concerns in Asia has been on the Korean peninsula and, to a lesser extent, Taiwan, the first real test of post-Cold War American strategy in the region may be further south, in the South China Sea. There, during the past two years there have been nearly a dozen reported incidents in which armed vessels of Asian nations challenged each other in disputed waters.

Two of these involved a U.S. treaty ally, the Philippines, which had reacted to construction by China of barracks on Mischief Reef in the Spratly island group by destroying Chinese markers on nearby islands and, in a tense confrontation in early 1995, apprehending Chinese fishermen. Following a heated exchange of accusations between Beijing and Manila, the American Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, intervened with the Chinese foreign minister, Qian Qichen, urging "in the strongest possible terms that these matters should not be settled by force."¹ Two months later a Philippine naval vessel escorted international journalists to Mischief Reef, where Chinese fishing boats cut across its bow, forcing the vessel to stop. According to the journalists, Philippine patrol boats interceded, and the vessel managed to launch helicopters to reconnoiter the reef before departing upon the approach of Chinese frigates.²

Dr. Kenny is a senior analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses. A West Point graduate, he commanded both an American infantry company and Special Forces units in Vietnam. He has an M.B.A. from Marymount University of Virginia and a Ph.D. in international relations from American University, and he is the author of *The American Role in Vietnam and East Asia: Between Two Revolutions* (New York: Praeger, 1984). He was Special Assistant to Ambassador Mike Mansfield in Japan, the senior staff member for East Asia and the Pacific of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and a foreign affairs officer with the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. He has taught at American University, George Washington University, and the Institute for International Relations in Hanoi. He is a senior associate of both the Gaston Sigur Center for East Asian Studies and the Council on U.S.-Japan Security Relations.

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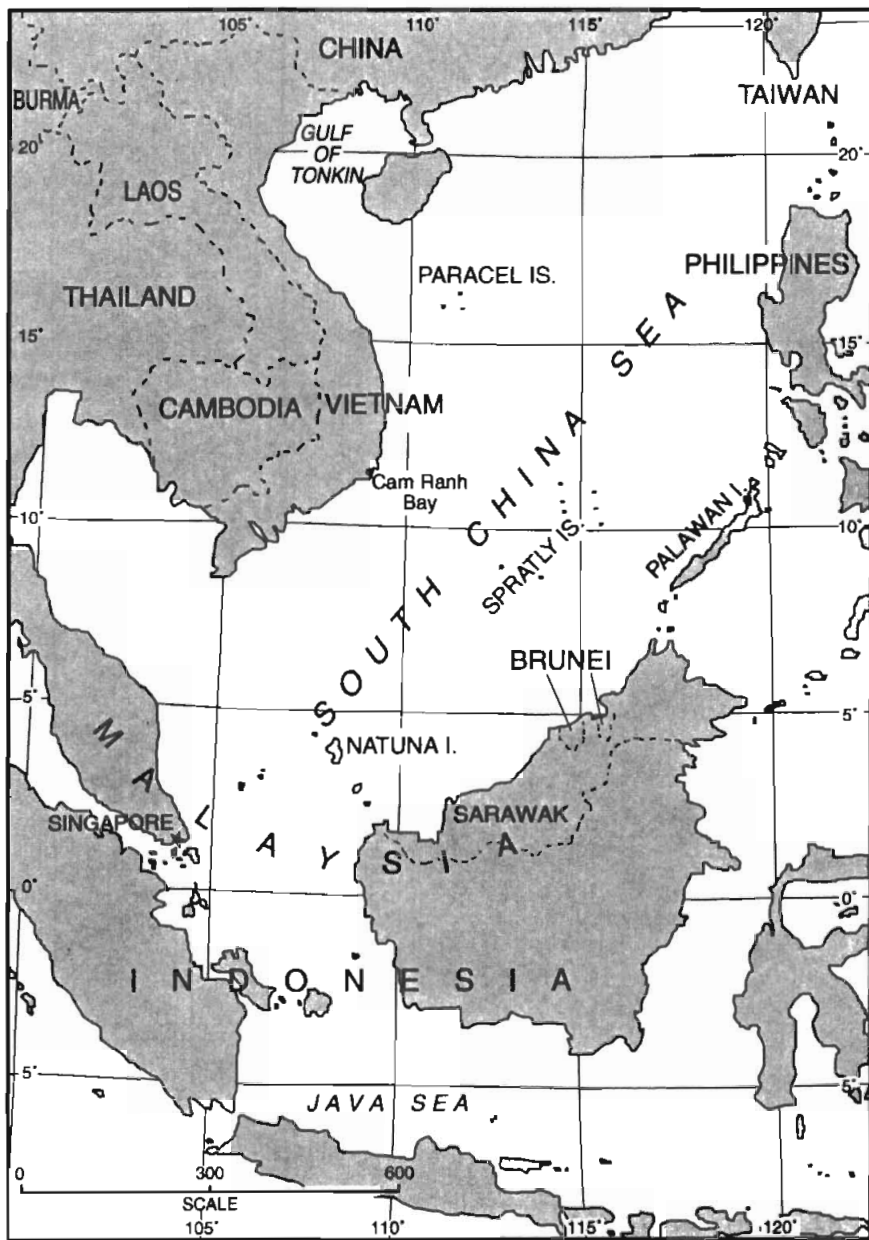
These and other recent incidents illustrate the risk of armed conflict among the seven claimants in the dispute over the South China Sea. The seven—China, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei—are at the heart of the most dynamic economic region in the world today; the sea over which they contend is a major crossroads of international maritime commerce, traversed each year by over forty thousand ships.³ Disruption of that commerce would be felt immediately, not only in Southeast Asia but throughout the Asia-Pacific region and adjoining areas, from the oil fields of the Middle East to the industries of Japan and Korea, and to the markets of North America. It would severely threaten the health of the international economy, no less so than closure of the Strait of Hormuz or the Panama Canal. China, which has yet to specify limits to its claim over the South China Sea, is attempting to build a “blue water” navy for regional maritime power projection; conflict, accordingly, could also further exacerbate an already tense U.S.–Chinese relationship. The stridency of Beijing’s claims, on grounds not just of purported economic benefit but of historical sovereignty, portends increased potential for conflict in an area where rapid economic growth has been predicated upon the relative peace and stability that obtained in the wake of the Vietnam War.

A Zone of Conflict

Stretching 1,800 miles from Sumatra to Taiwan, the South China Sea is larger than the Mediterranean and contains five zones of potential conflict. The first of these, the Paracel Islands, includes a 2,700-meter airstrip constructed by the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (or PLA) on Woody Island, from which aircraft could reconnoiter or attack as far south as the Spratlys. In 1974 China seized a portion of the Paracels occupied by South Vietnam and has since rejected competing claims by both Vietnam and Taiwan. Southeast Asian states do not seriously challenge the Chinese claim to the Paracels, but they worry that China might use the islands as a base for southward power projection.⁴

The second potential zone of conflict is the Gulf of Tonkin, where Vietnam claims jurisdiction based on an 1887 Sino–French convention. In practical terms, this means that oil companies prospecting in Gulf “blocks” allocated by Hanoi must do so in the presence of Chinese rigs in those same blocks. Because petroleum yields from this area have been quite meager, however, the potential for conflict is less than it otherwise might be.

Further south along Vietnam’s continental shelf, however, a more contentious situation has arisen: the Mobil Oil Company is drilling in Vietnam’s “Blue Dragon” field just west of a block allocated to Crestone, a Denver-based firm, by China. The two U.S. firms are both working in zones claimed by both countries. During the past year Vietnam drove off a Chinese seismic survey ship



in the Crestone block, after which Chinese warships blockaded a Vietnamese oil drilling rig in the Mobil area. In August 1995 Crestone signed a contract to explore its block despite Vietnamese protests.

The fourth zone of potential conflict is on the continental shelf off the Indonesian coast; with gas reserves estimated at over forty-five trillion cubic feet, it is among the largest fields in the world. Although direct conflict has been avoided in this area, Chinese demands for joint development of petroleum resources could create problems in the future.⁵

Finally, there is the dispute over the Spratly Islands. The Spratlys (referred to by the Chinese as the Nansha, and by the Vietnamese as the Truong Sa, islands) are a small group of islets, coral reefs, and sandbars, some of them visible only at low tide, located about 280 miles east and southeast of Cam Ranh Bay. The situation here is generally considered the most contentious in the South China Sea, because of the myriad claims by the regional states. China, Taiwan, and Vietnam claim the whole group; the Philippines nearly all of it; and Malaysia a small portion of the southern sector. These claims are based not on the international law of the sea (which does not adjudicate sovereignty over land areas) but on history—typically on vague and fragmentary records of minor maritime exploits exaggerated to demonstrate past overlordship. Notwithstanding China's assertions that the islands have been part of its territory since "time immemorial," no nation maintained a continuous presence there until after World War II. In recent years there have been minor squabbles between the Philippines and Vietnam, but the major disagreements about the Spratlys have been between China and Vietnam, and between China and the Philippines. These disputes have grown increasingly strident since 1988, when the Chinese sank three Vietnamese ships, killing seventy people, and drove the Vietnamese off Johnson Reef, and continuing with the already-cited Chinese confrontations with the Philippines.

All five disputes in the South China Sea arise from the same sources: a nebulous Chinese claim to the entire body of water, and a specific one to its resources. Both are based on history. Notwithstanding the fact that a regional maritime commission of the Nationalist Chinese government observed in 1928 that "the Paracel archipelago is our nation's southernmost territory," the same regime issued in 1947 a map on which nine dotted lines indicating Chinese territory circumscribed the entire South China Sea.⁶ The map has been distributed by the successor regime in Beijing, apparently suggesting an assertion of sovereignty over all islands, waters, and resources within these lines. Strictly speaking, by cartographic convention, the dotted lines of the 1947 map refer specifically to the enclosed islands. Also, no sweeping assertion of sovereignty has been made, only—in 1992, by a People's Congress declaration—to the

territorial waters of those islands, which, under the law of the sea, would properly follow from ownership (if established) of the islands. Certainly, a claim to all the islands in the South China Sea and to their territorial waters (with the control of both resources and transit rights involved therein) is a very substantial one.⁷ However, Chinese government spokesmen have recently stated, unofficially, that China does not actually claim the entire South China Sea but rather wants, for the time being, to set aside the question of sovereignty in favor of bilateral negotiations over joint exploration and development.

Regional Foreign Policy Interests

China, like other nations in the region, is attracted to the South China Sea by maritime resources. First, the petroleum deposits off Vietnam and Indonesia are naturally tempting to a nation that in 1994 became a net oil importer for the first time in two decades, and whose energy demand during the next twenty years is expected to rise 160 percent and require an investment of \$1 trillion.⁸ Second, the rich fishing grounds of the Spratlys are especially important as a source of protein for a population whose aggregate consumption of fish has doubled in the past ten years. Finally, although a long way from developing deep-seabed mining techniques, China may have ambitions someday to extract cobalt and manganese nodules, as Japanese and American companies plan to do elsewhere in the Pacific.⁹

For Beijing, however, there is an even more important reason for asserting itself in the South China Sea—the symbolic value of dominating what Chinese strategists call the “national gateway” to China. The idea is rooted in a political culture that seeks to restore China’s great-power status in Asia, and it has been given impetus by the jockeying to succeed Deng Xiaoping, in which each faction seeks to highlight its nationalist credentials by asserting a vision of a greater China. For the government, in practical terms this has meant using the sovereignty issue as a unifying theme, by developing a strategy to control the maritime approaches through which the “barbarians” entered during the century of Chinese humiliation that lasted from the Opium War (1839–1842) until the end of the Japanese occupation in 1945. Thus, the People’s Liberation Army Navy, heretofore unable to conduct sustained operations over the South China Sea, has received a major share of recent defense budgets. The PLA Air Force is also developing a power-projection capability (though the twenty-seven Su-27 Flankers acquired from Russia in 1994 have thus far been permitted to fly over the sea but rarely, possibly due as much to fear of pilot defection as to technical deficiencies).¹⁰

Vietnam, with a coastline of over 2,500 kilometers on the South China Sea, also has a major interest in developments there. Like China it declares a historical claim

to the Spratlys and points to the discovery of fifteenth and sixteenth-century Vietnamese pottery to support it. But Hanoi obviously believes that possession is nine-tenths of the law. In 1975 it replaced troops of the former South Vietnam on five positions in the Spratlys and claimed an additional five. In recent years it has occupied more than a dozen others, constructing at least ten lighthouses

Occupation of Spratly Islets, etc.

Vietnam	25
Rep. of the Philippines	8
China	8
Malaysia	6
Taiwan	1

and holding more features (cays, shoals, reefs, rock outcroppings, and islands) than any other nation (see table).¹¹

One consequence of this scramble to mark rocks, build structures with national flags or markings, and occupy features is that future efforts to claim territory are likely to involve direct conflict with other parties, as in the Chinese embroglio with Vietnam over Johnson Reef in 1988. In July 1995, well aware of this possibility, the Vietnamese deputy foreign minister, Vu Khoan, led a delegation to Beijing to establish a bilateral "experts group" in an effort to defuse political tension and seek a *modus vivendi*.¹² Not accidentally, this diplomatic effort coincided with Vietnam's joining the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, on 28 July. The subsequent efforts by the ASEAN Regional Forum for peaceful resolution of disputes characteristically favored the status quo, thereby tending in effect to ratify the Vietnamese position in the Spratlys.

Vietnamese policy also seeks international support for claims on its continental shelf, by establishing joint ventures with companies like Mitsubishi (of Japan), Petronas (Malaysia), Mobil, Royal Dutch Shell, BHP (Australia), British Petroleum, Total (France), and others. The search for broad international backing may also partly explain the decision by Hanoi to permit a low-level Russian naval presence in Cam Ranh Bay and to welcome successive commanders in chief of the U.S. Pacific Command, beginning with Admiral Charles Larson in 1994 and Admiral Richard Macke in 1995.

The Philippines, with the weakest naval forces in ASEAN, has also designed a policy to elicit international support for its claims. In 1992 it sponsored the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, which called for peaceful resolution of disputes in the South China Sea. Two years later it contracted with a U.S. company, Alcorn, for a seismic search in disputed waters west of Palawan.

Indeed, it may have been in reaction to this move that China began marking islands in the same region and constructing barracks for fishermen on Mischief Reef. The Philippine reaction—destroying the markers and apprehending sixty-two Chinese fishermen fifty miles west of Palawan—was prompted largely by an election campaign, but events threatened to escalate, as the 1995 naval confrontation noted above well illustrates. During this period, Philippine spokesmen evoked the Mutual Defense Treaty with the United States, which, while it applies only to the metropolitan territory of the Philippines, does call for bilateral consultation in the event of an attack on Philippine armed forces. It appears to have been this clause that prompted Secretary Christopher to remind the Chinese foreign minister that the United States has treaty obligations with the Philippines.¹³

Indonesia is another nation that has begun to resort to firm measures in the South China Sea. Previously, of all the claimants to portions of the South China Sea, Djakarta went the farthest to accommodate Beijing. It avoided public criticism of the Chinese claims, which are even more extreme in Indonesia's southern waters than in the Spratlys. For five years it also hosted informal "Track II" talks with leading non-governmental experts in order to develop confidence-building measures. Both in bilateral governmental and multilateral non-governmental talks, however, China refused to discuss the conflicting claims; the government of Indonesia has accordingly decided on other approaches.

Specifically, Djakarta has authorized a \$35 billion joint venture between its state oil company, Pertamina, and Exxon to explore for petroleum reserves, mostly gas, in an area 250 kilometers northeast of the Indonesian island of Natuna. The area falls within China's 1947 map, and Beijing refused to respond to a 1994 *démarche* by the Indonesian foreign minister, Ali Alatas, demanding an explanation of its exaggerated claim. In consequence, Djakarta announced its intention to increase military air patrols in the region and to encourage people to resettle on Natuna Island. Like Vietnam and the Philippines, Indonesia has also quietly urged the United States to play a more active role in the dispute.¹⁴

Other Southeast Asian nations have been less assertive. Malaysia is mainly interested in gas reserves and freedom of navigation between Borneo and the Malay Peninsula. Taiwan occupies Itu Aba, the largest of the Spratlys, and has supported the traditional Chinese claim to all of the islands (differing with Beijing only about the legitimate government of China), while Brunei claims the Malaysian-occupied Louisa Reef, in the southernmost Spratlys.

American Interests

American interests in the region are threatened by recent events. First is the credibility of U.S. security commitments, not just to the Philippines but to other

friends and allies in the region as well. Failure to respond to overt acts of aggression is likely to confirm the increasingly widespread Asian perception of U.S. disengagement from the region. Asians see the vacuum of power created by the demise of the Soviet Union and the American withdrawal from Subic Bay as an opening for a resurgent China. The South China Sea, in this view, is the first major test of the new structure of power in Asia: the issue takes on an ideological character, Chinese military capabilities are exaggerated, a rise of Chinese political power commensurate with imputedly great economic potential is foreseen, and continued American disengagement is taken as a fact of life.

The second American interest is peace and stability in an area where the United States fought three wars in the previous generation. Disputes in the South China Sea have the potential to force the nation to choose between sacrificing the aforementioned credibility or risking yet another conflict in Asia. It is perhaps for this reason that American policy statements have been, until recently, markedly noncommittal and detached, favoring generic goals like regional stability, peaceful settlement of disputes, and freedom of navigation, and usually taking no position on the relative merits of the claims in dispute.

The third U.S. interest affected is economic. American trade with the nations of East Asia now exceeds \$400 billion annually, and it is expected to be twice that with the European Union within five years. The flow of U.S. investment has tripled in the past decade and is now approaching \$100 billion. Southeast Asia has been a major impetus to this growth, with imports from the United States up 50 percent during the past three years alone. A conflict over territory and rights in the South China Sea, disrupting the stability upon which the dynamic pattern of regional trade and investment rests, could thereby threaten a major and growing U.S. economic interest.

Closely connected to its economic stake is the U.S. commitment—not generic in this case, but highly specific—to freedom of navigation. This freedom could be at risk from potential claims inconsistent with the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea. Although Vietnam, the Philippines, and Indonesia have ratified the Convention, China, like the United States, has not yet acceded to it. There is concern, therefore, that were the Chinese to establish sovereignty over the many islets, reefs, etc., in the Spratlys, that nation might not only claim the twelve-nautical-mile territorial sea authorized by the Convention but assert further a right to control shipping and air traffic within an additional twelve miles, as it does on the mainland, or even throughout a two-hundred-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone around each island. Evidence of Chinese intent to claim EEZs around the islands is only fragmentary, but recent landfill and construction on outcroppings barely above water at high tide suggest an intention to argue that these outcroppings are not mere “rocks” but islands that, as required by the Convention, “can sustain human habitation or economic life

on their own."¹⁵ Such islands could conceivably support a claim to an EEZ that would encompass over 126,000 square miles of ocean, including the major sea lanes east and west of the Spratlys.

Chinese spokesmen do not deny a possible EEZ claim, but they have given repeated assurances that China's "indisputable sovereignty" over the Nansha (Spratly) islands will not impede freedom of navigation through the South China Sea. In fact, China has a major stake in that navigation; its own annual trade through the sea, including its trade via Hong Kong, is now over \$100 billion.¹⁶ Disruption of that trade would not only alienate its multiple trading partners but also jeopardize its current rapid economic growth. Thus the U.S. concern as to freedom of navigation is likely to be limited to the areas immediately surrounding the Spratlys, not the major sea lanes.

Finally, and perhaps most important for the future, is the U.S. interest in facilitating Chinese entrance into the community of Asia-Pacific nations as a peaceful partner abiding by generally accepted international standards. A conflict in the South China Sea in which Beijing violated international law and forcibly imposed its will on Southeast Asian nations could set off an action-and-reaction syndrome in which Sino-American relations would deteriorate to the detriment of that interest. First, the prospect raises the specter of direct military confrontation (although this is an unlikely contingency); second, it puts the United States in a difficult position with its ASEAN friends, implying the possibility of Washington being forced either to weaken its credibility in Southeast Asia or to retaliate diplomatically or economically against China; and third, it strengthens the hand of Chinese nationalists who seek great-power status via gunboat diplomacy rather than continued economic expansion and peaceful relations.

American Policy

For the United States, there has been a strong tendency to avoid entanglement in disputes over the South China Sea. The area is, after all, eight thousand miles away, unsettlingly close to the scene of another Asian "bridge too far," and one of far more importance to Asian trading and investment interests than its own. Eighty percent of the Japanese oil supply, for example, passes through the South China Sea. American oil companies exploring in the region have been told by Washington they do so at their own risk, and American policy makers seem, as noted, not to have chosen sides in any of the disputes.

Recent events in the region have called into question, however, the risks of a noncommittal approach. First, there appears to be an increasing potential for violence. The tendency among some Southeast Asian nations is to reinforce their claims through diplomacy and increased presence on the islands, before any Chinese military buildup can alter the balance of power in the region. Nationalist

sentiments, which arose during the incident on Mischief Reef, could, under the circumstances, combine with an exaggerated view by Spratly claimants of the economic stakes to prompt further confrontation. Second, the ASEAN countries have begun to question the credibility of the United States in connection with its policy on the South China Sea. Indonesians and Filipinos in particular have seen its role in the dispute as confirming their fears of American disengagement from Asia. Finally, there is some concern that the military modernization efforts in China and Southeast Asia, fed in part by concern over the South China Sea, could lead to a regional arms race.¹⁷

In view of these factors, the United States began in early 1995 to take a more active interest in the region. In February the Department of Defense issued a strategy paper that clarified the U.S. position—to urge peaceful settlement of South China Sea issues, to oppose strongly the threat or use of military force, and to take no position on the merits of competing claims but resist any maritime claims beyond those permitted by the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention.¹⁸ In April Secretary of State Christopher told the Chinese foreign minister, Qian Qichen, that the United States has a vested interest in preventing the situation from spiraling out of control.¹⁹ In May the Department of State released a more comprehensive policy statement, affirming that “the United States has an abiding interest in the maintenance of peace and stability in the South China Sea” and calling upon the claimants to intensify their diplomatic efforts. The latter point, it should be noted, supports Southeast Asian efforts to clarify the issue, as opposed to the Chinese posture of deliberate ambiguity. The May statement, moreover, reiterated an American “fundamental interest” in freedom of navigation, calling it “essential for peace and prosperity of the entire Asia-Pacific region, including the United States.”²⁰

U.S. policy on the South China Sea is also affected by broader efforts to prevent conflict with China, and other states, by building an infrastructure of relationships that serve mutual interests. Of particular note is the military component, the Cooperative Engagement strategy, which emphasizes the need to “act with friends and allies as partners with a common stake in regional security.” This approach was highlighted by a series of Chinese and American defense exchanges begun in late 1993, including the visit to Beijing by Secretary of Defense William Perry in 1994 and two U.S. Navy ship visits in 1995. Measures to rebuild a military-to-military relationship and promote mutual understanding and transparency were interrupted by the Chinese reaction to the issuance of a transit visa for Premier Lee Teng-hui of the Republic of China. The effort had been intended to remind Beijing that U.S. and Chinese military forces have common interests, such as freedom of navigation, and that the U.S. forward presence in the Pacific is not directed against China as an enemy. At the same time, the United States continues to conduct military exercises in

Southeast Asia, recently combining unrelated individual exercises into a series of bilateral naval exercises with the ASEAN countries.

The "web of relationships" effort with China, which may be seen as a continuation of the "bonds of cooperation" concept of the 1980s, extends to the increasing economic interchange highlighted by the late Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown's approval in 1994 of \$6 billion of new American business. From a foreign policy viewpoint, these transactions create not only greater understanding between nations but greater interdependence as well, thereby reducing the possibility, and raising the cost, of any conflict.

In Perspective

For the near and middle terms, at least, the most important South China Sea issue is the Spratly Islands, and they alone, by any objective standard, are not worth the cost of war involving the United States. Most of the so-called islands are nothing more than rock outcroppings, of marginal economic value at best. The total area of all the islands combined, at low tide, is a mere 2.3 square kilometers. They are volcanic, whereas most oil and gas is found in sedimentary geophysical structures, and around the islands the ocean depth drops sharply in all directions. Whereas the oil and gas off Natuna island and the southeast coast of Vietnam are located on continental shelves at depths of a hundred to three hundred feet, the ocean just west of Palawan drops to 13,455 feet, and the northwest quadrant of the Spratlys reaches depths as great as 14,500 feet. Although there are sections only a few thousand feet deep, even in the unlikely case that there are significant oil and gas reserves, its extraction would be prohibitively expensive, if not impossible.

While the physical reality of the Spratlys suggests their relative insignificance, Asian perceptions stress their relationship to the truly valuable real estate of the continental shelves of Southeast Asia, or, in the case of China, their location as a gateway to the mainland itself. If EEZs were to be claimed from Spratly baselines, the potentially rich offshore petroleum resources between Sarawak and Vietnam could be drawn in. Of course the Law of the Sea Convention would restrict the extent of such benefits to any one nation, but the threat of such claims might inspire Southeast Asian nations to negotiate joint development of resources they would otherwise attempt to dominate themselves. Such a result appears to be an objective of current Chinese policy.

The challenge to the United States under these circumstances is to help defuse tensions while upholding the respect for international law and freedom of navigation that are at the root of continued regional prosperity. Ways to do this include, firstly, a more active diplomatic role, such as making available good offices to arbitrate disputes, and also supporting Asian nations, like Australia and

Indonesia, who seek the same goals; encouraging negotiations to resolve sovereignty and rights issues, as well as Track II enabling discussions; promoting a legal solution insofar as possible, including U.S. and Chinese accession to the Law of the Sea Convention; and soliciting Japanese and Korean support for this general approach, especially the use of economic policy to encourage solutions. Secondly the United States is well positioned to advance such technical measures as clarifying the meager economic value of the Spratlys, and, if necessary, supporting an independent geological survey and providing Global Position System-based maps, without which definition of maritime zones is impossible.

A third way is to lend greater support to such arms control measures as transparency of military activities, notification of military maneuvers, and limits on military presence, as well as confidence-building measures in areas of common interest like freedom of navigation and environmental and anti-piracy coordination. Fourthly, the nation would do well to define its interest in the region more precisely if it is to justify its current strong, forward military presence. It also would also be useful to clarify the Mutual Defense Treaty with the Philippines, pointing out to that nation's neighbors the obligations upon the United States in the event of an attack on Philippine armed forces. Fifthly, the United States should consider expanding the Cooperative Engagement strategy, especially in regard to reestablishing a military relationship with China. Finally, there is a need for prudence so as to avoid entrapment or entanglement in local disputes over which Washington has no control.

For generations the Spratly islands, at the heart of the South China Sea, have been known to mariners as "dangerous ground." Today, the combination of the search for scarce ocean resources, nationalistic fervor, and a perceived alteration in the regional balance of power makes them dangerous in a different way. Problems in the Spratlys, and in the remainder of the South China Sea, are not now a high priority for American policy, but they could become one if allowed to fester, for they are in the maritime center of a region whose economic and political health is of long-term importance to the United States. The consequences of a small incident escalating into a broad confrontation are too serious if all is not done now to encourage peaceful resolution of the conflicting claims.

Notes

1. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, as quoted in *Indochina Digest*, 21 April 1995.
2. For a description of these events, see Rodney Tasker, "A Line in the Sand," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 6 April 1995 pp. 14-6; "Showdown at Mischief Reef," *Indochina Digest*, 19 May 1995, p. 3; and *Washington Post*, 17 May 1995.
3. John Noer, "Maritime Economic Interests in the Sea Lines of Communication through the South China Sea," The Center for Naval Analyses, Alexandria, Va., December 1995 (forthcoming from National Defense Univ., 1996.)

4. Daniel Dzurek, "Resource Disputes in the South China Sea," and Chien Chung, "Economic Development of Islets in the South China Sea," *AEI Conference Report*, 9 September 1994, p. 2 and Table 6.
5. John McBeth, "Oil Rich Diet," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 27 April 1995, p. 28.
6. Chinese Commission Report, as quoted by Marwyn S. Samuels, *Contest for the South China Sea* (New York: Methuen, 1982), p. 57.
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8. "China's Energy Demand, Investments to Soar," *Oil and Gas Journal*, 10 April 1995, pp. 30-1.
9. *World Resources, 1994-1995*, p. 352; and Food and Agriculture Organization, *Yearbook of Fishery Statistics*, 1991.
10. For a discussion of Chinese military strategy and development, see Paul Godwin and John Shultz, "China and Arms Control: Transition in East Asia," *Arms Control Today*, November 1994, p. 8; Robert Karniol, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 18 March 1995, p. 17; and Jonathan Pollack, *China's Air Force Enters the 21st Century* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1995).
11. R. Haller-Trost, "International Law and the History of the Claims to the Spratly Islands," *AEI Conference Report*, 9 September 1994; and Michael C. Dunn, "The Spratly Islands Dispute: Who Occupies What," *The Estimate*, 2 March 1995 (modified by the author with current information from a variety of sources).
12. Conversations of the author with Deputy Foreign Minister Vu Khoan at Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., 11 May 1995.
13. "Showdown at Mischief Reef," p. 3. Tasker; Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States of America and the Republic of the Philippines, Article 5; and Statement of His Excellency, President Fidel V. Ramos, 29 March 1995, Foreign Ministry of the Philippines, Manila.
14. Michael Richardson, "Strategic Signpost for Asia," *Asia-Pacific Defense Review*, Annual Reference Edition, 1995 pp. 49-51; and McBeth.
15. 1982 Convention, Article 121; and U.S. State Dept., "United States Responses to Excessive Maritime Claims," in *Limits in the Seas*, no. 112 (Washington: 9 March 1992).
16. The International Monetary Fund, *Direction of Trade Yearbook, 1994-1995*, 1995, Quarterly Reports for first and second quarter, 1995; and calculations by the author.
17. See, for example, Panitan Wattanayagorn and Desmond Ball, "A Regional Arms Race?," in *Journal of Strategic Studies*, September 1995, pp. 147-74; and "Head Off East Asia Arms Race," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, 17 April 1995, p. 68.
18. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *United States Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region*, Office of International Security Affairs (Washington: February 1995), pp. 19-20.
19. Christopher.
20. U.S. State Dept., "United States Policy on the Spratlys and the South China Sea" (Washington: 11 May 1995).

Ψ

USAFA Military History Symposium

The United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs will host the Seventeenth Military History Symposium, "Rites of Passage: Educating and Training Junior Officers in the Twentieth Century," 20-22 November 1996. For further information, contact Major Tony Kern, HQ USAFA/DFH, 2354 Fairchild Drive, Suite 6F37, USAF Academy, Colo., 80840-6246. Phone (719) 472-4727; fax (719) 472-2970; e-mail kerntt.scs@usafa.af.mil.