

Center for Strategic and International Studies

Tensions In The South China Sea Explained In 19 Maps

The [Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative](#), partners of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, is an interactive, regularly-updated source for information, analysis, and policy exchange on maritime security issues in Asia.

Below are 18 republished maps from their report (and here is the full [analysis and methodology](#)).

1. A Political Map

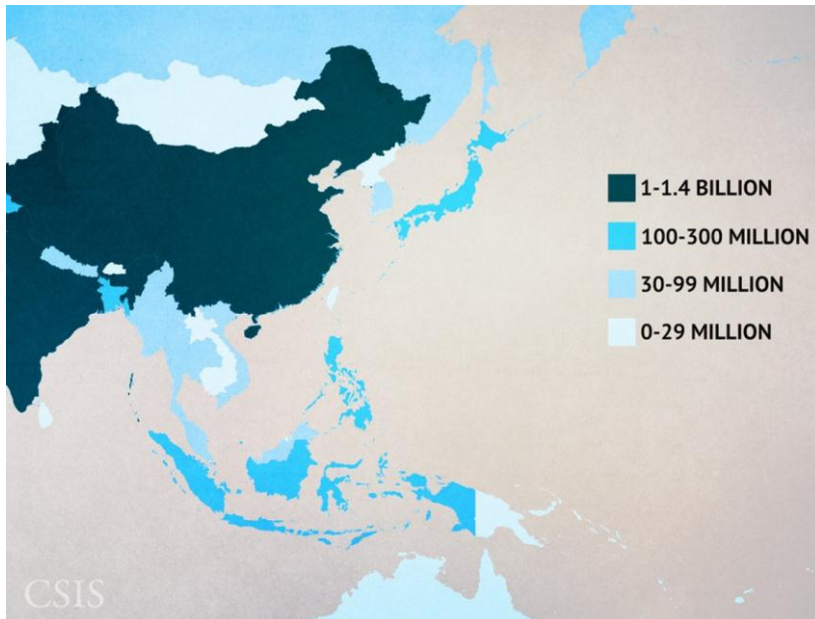
The Indo-Pacific region consists of over 20 countries. It spans from Russia in the North to Australia and New Zealand in the South, and from India in the West to Papua New Guinea in the East.



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2. Population in Asia

Asia is a vibrant and dynamic region with 4.3 billion inhabitants – 60% of the global population. China is the most populous state in the region with 1.4 billion people. India is projected to pass China's population in about 15 years, becoming the world's most populous nation with 1.5 billion inhabitants.



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3. Trade Routes and Straits

Over half of the world's commercial shipping passes through the waterways of the Indo-Pacific region. The Strait of Malacca, in particular, is one of the most important shipping lanes in the world.

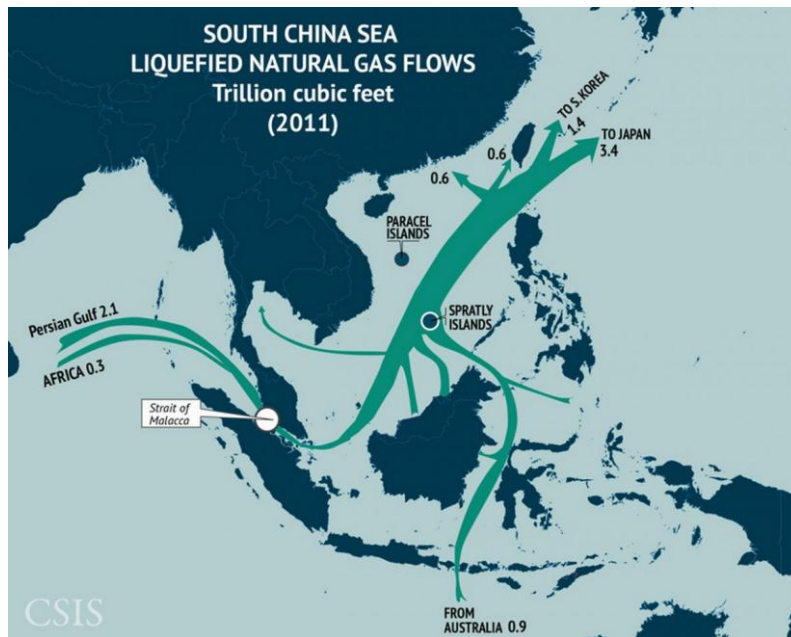
The strait links the Indian and Pacific Oceans and carries approximately 25% of all traded goods. It also carries approximately 25% of all oil that travels by sea. At its narrowest point just south of Singapore, the Strait of Malacca is only 1.5 nautical miles wide, making it one of the world's most noteworthy strategic chokepoints.



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4. South China Sea LNG Flows

One-third of the world's liquefied natural gas passes through the Straits of Malacca and into the South China Sea, with the bulk of it originating in the Persian Gulf. LNG also flows into the region from Southeast Asia and Oceania. Much of this imported LNG is bound for Japan and South Korea.

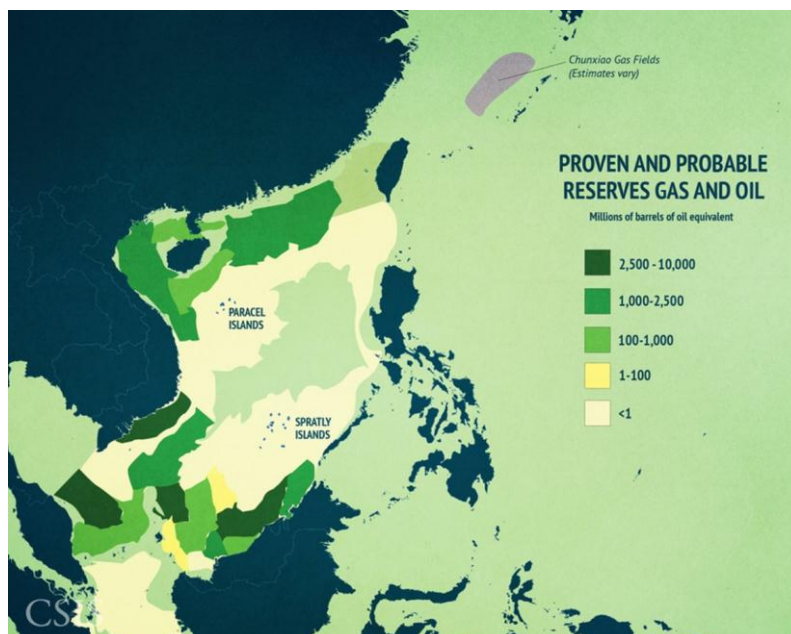


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5. Natural Resources in the South China Sea

The South China Sea contains significant proved and probable oil reserves, and countries in the region are eager to extract these.

Particularly large quantities lie in the EEZs of Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The East China Sea is also home to a gas field, but the extent of its reserves are unknown.



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6. Trade Flows In Asia

In addition to providing passage for incoming commodities, the states of Maritime Asia also have deeply interdependent trade relations among themselves.

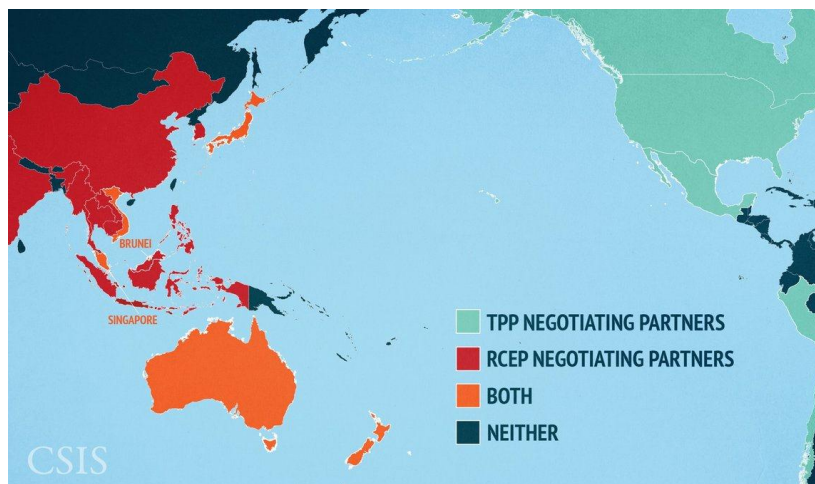
China and ASEAN (Southeast Asia), China and Japan, and Japan and ASEAN states have robust trade relations. The China-ASEAN trade relationship is especially strong.



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7. TPP and RCEP Membership

There are currently two free trade agreements under negotiation in East Asia. At present, Trans Pacific Partnership negotiating partners include Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States, and Vietnam. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership negotiating partners include Australia, China, India, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, and all ASEAN member states. These two agreements, and the fact that some countries (Australia, New Zealand, Brunei, Japan, Malaysia and Singapore) are party to both, illustrates the dense economic interdependence of the region.



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8. Multilateral Memberships

There are numerous multilateral fora in the region, and Asian nations vary substantially in their participation in these organizations. China, Japan, South Korea, and Australia are the most participatory states in the region when it comes to multinational fora.



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9. UN Convention on the Law of the Sea

Most nations in maritime Asia have signed and ratified the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. UNCLOS defines the rights and responsibilities of nations with respect to the world's oceans, establishing guidelines for the use of natural resources, the environment, and for commercial affairs. UNCLOS entered into force in 1994.

The United States of America is not a signatory to the treaty, although it follows its provisions as customary international law.



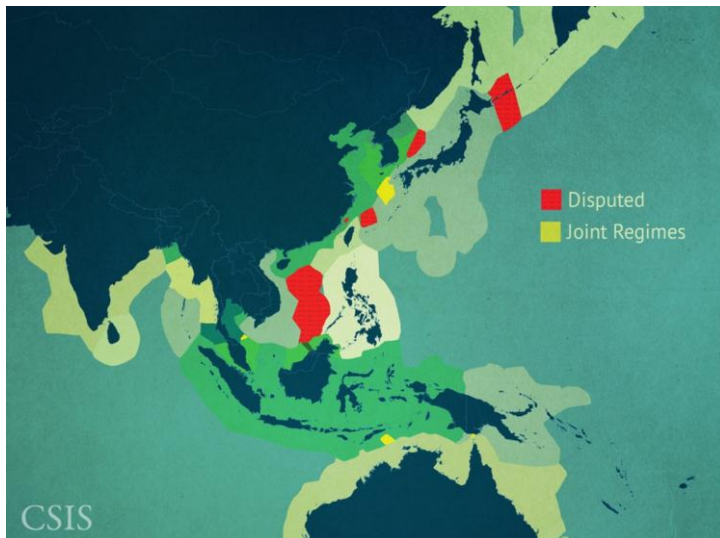
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10. Exclusive Economic Zones

Under the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, coastal states may claim an "Exclusive Economic Zone" of up to 200 nautical miles. States have the sole rights to natural resource extraction within their own EEZs, but must also allow innocent passage through these zones according to UNCLOS. Because of their proximity, some states in maritime Asia claim EEZs that are overlapping.

The South China Sea is the site of several ongoing EEZ disputes between neighbors. Further north, Japan, China and South Korea also have EEZ boundary disputes. In areas shaded in

yellow, however, states have agreed to jointly fish or develop an area despite an ongoing EEZ dispute.

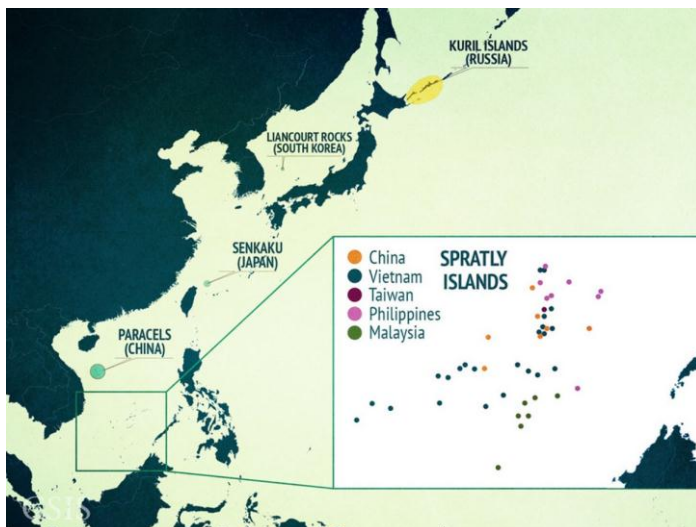


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11. Territorial Controls

The fact that a country claims a particular territory does not, however, mean that it controls it. Some countries have physical control over many of the islands that they claim, while others do not.

Five different countries control some land features in the Spratly Islands, while just one state controls the Kuril Islands, Liancourt Rocks, Senkaku Islands, and Paracel Islands.



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12. The Nine-Dash Line

One unique claim is China's Nine-Dash Line, which depicts Beijing's claims in the South China Sea. The map originally contained 11 dashes and was issued by the Nationalist Chinese government in 1947. The Communist government adopted it when it took power in 1949, and later dropped two dashes to allow China and Vietnam to settle their claims in the Gulf of Tonkin.

The Nine-Dash Line encompasses much of the South China Sea, but Beijing has not clarified whether it is making territorial claims on the land features inside this line or whether it is

asserting maritime rights as well. In 2014, Beijing released a new map that featured an additional 10th dash to the east of Taiwan. Because it predates UNCLOS by several decades, the Nine-Dash Line is unrelated to an EEZ claim.

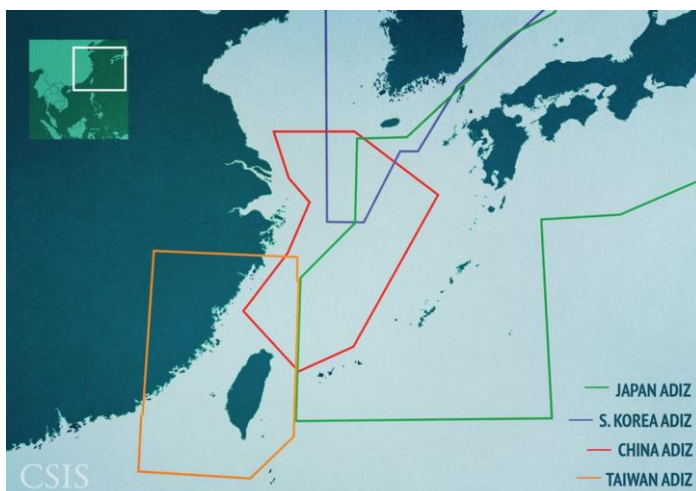


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13. Air Defense Identification Zones

Several states in Maritime Asia have declared Air Defense Identification Zones. This includes India, China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, North Korea, and Taiwan. An ADIZ is an identified area of airspace extending beyond a national boundary in which civilian aircraft are required to identify themselves and may be subject to interception for that country's national security. There are no international agreements or laws that govern the use of ADIZs: they are zones that individual countries establish for their own safety and security. The United States established the first ADIZ shortly after World War II.

Although ADIZs may generally increase transparency and reduce the risk of accidents, several countries in East Asia have overlapping ADIZs. China's East China Sea ADIZ, declared in 2013, also includes two pieces of disputed territory. According to the Convention on International Civil Aviation, states have sovereignty over the airspace over their territory, including territorial waters. Air Defense Identification Zones do not, however, confer any sovereign rights.



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14. Maritime Hotspots

In the last several decades there have been multiple interstate incidents – vehicle collisions, armed clashes, close military encounters and other standoffs – in maritime Asia. Incidents have clustered around the Spratly Islands, Paracel Islands and Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea, the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, and the Northern Limit Line in the Yellow Sea.

Other hotspots include the Kuril Islands in the Northern Pacific, and the Liancourt Rocks in the Sea of Japan. This raises concern that these could be the sites of serious accidents or potential flashpoints for escalation in the future.



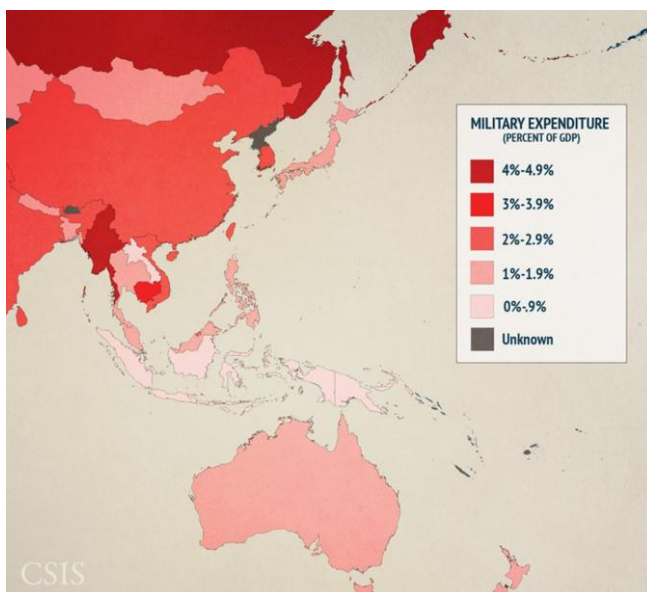
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15. Asian Military Budgets

Asian militaries also vary significantly in terms of spending as a percentage of GDP.

According to this metric, Russia and Myanmar are the biggest spenders in the region, spending between four and five percent of GDP on defense.

China, Vietnam, and South Korea are next, spending between three and four percent. Japan, the Philippines, Australia and Malaysia spend just one to two percent of GDP on their militaries, while most of South East Asia spends less than one percent.

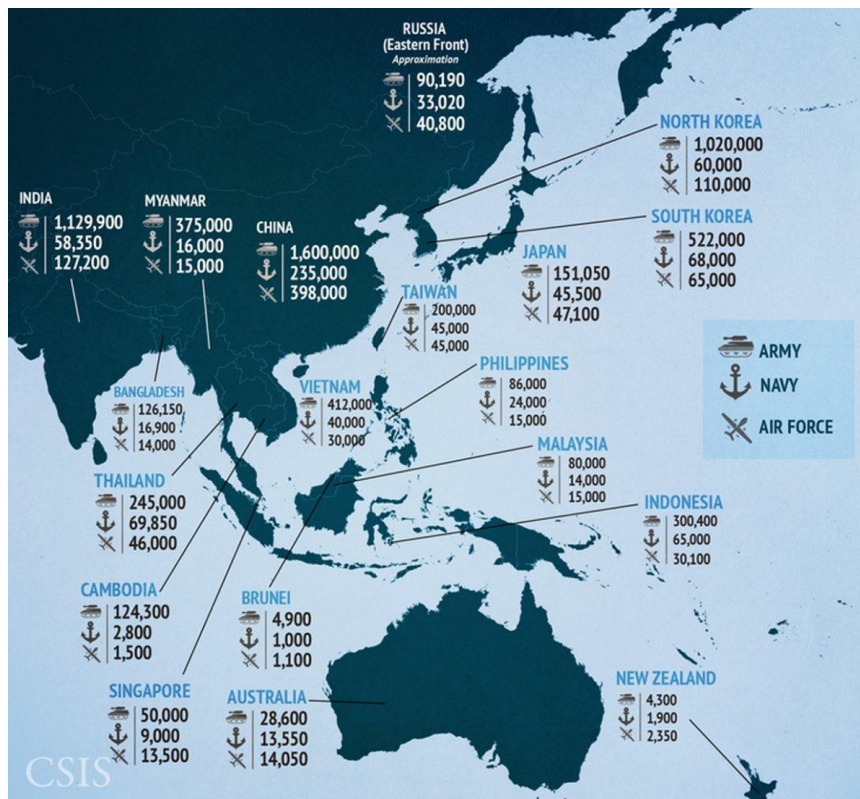


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The strength of the militaries of countries in maritime Asia varies significantly, as demonstrated by the significant disparities in their numbers of army, navy, and air force personnel.

China, India, and North Korea each field over 1 million ground troops, and Russia has nearly that number on its Eastern Front alone. China also has the highest numbers of air force and navy personnel by far.

Brunei, in contrast, boasts the lowest numbers of armed forces with fewer than 5,000 ground troops and approximately 1,000 navy and air force personnel.

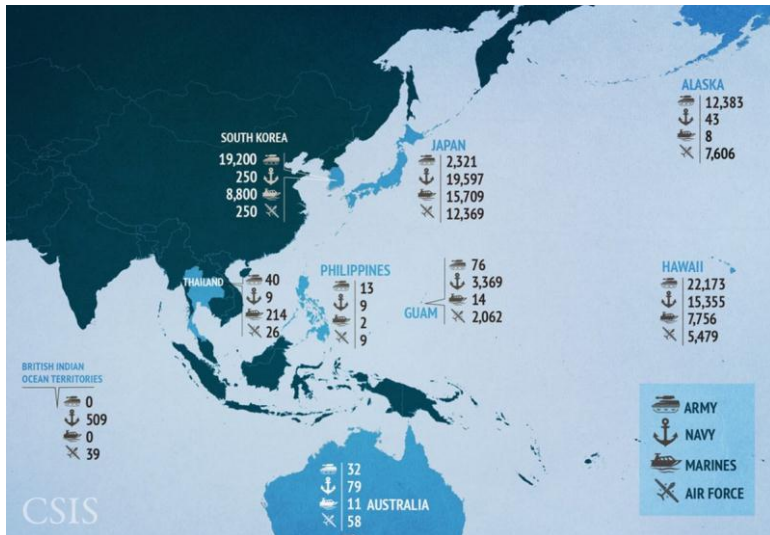


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17. US Military Personnel in East Asia

The US military has long maintained a significant, standing forward presence in the Indo-Pacific and maintains ground, air, naval, and marine assets in many Asian countries. Its most significant troop presence is in South Korea and Japan. It has also recently established a rotational military presence with some Pacific partners, including the Philippines and Australia.

US assets and personnel deployed in Hawaii, Alaska, and Guam, are also devoted to the safety and security of the region.

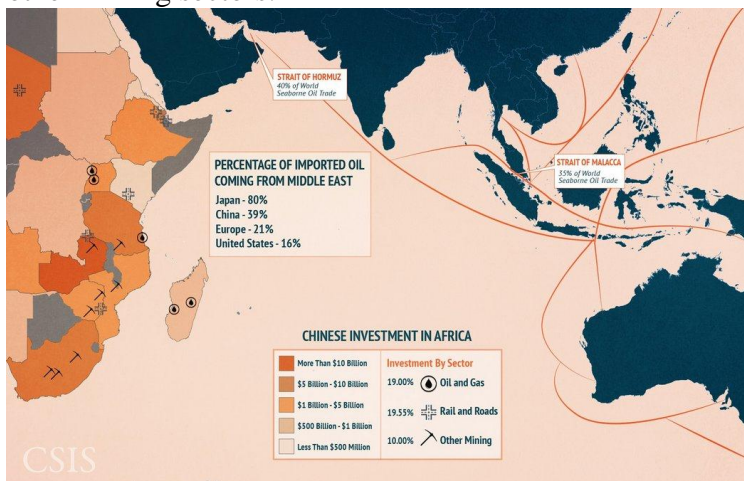


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18. Trade and Resources in the Indian Ocean

The Indian Ocean is not the site of nearly as many territorial or maritime disputes, but it is nonetheless inseparable Pacific assets and interests.

Eighty percent of Japanese and 39 percent of Chinese oil imports pass through the Indian Ocean en route from the Middle East. Chinese firms also have billions of dollars of investments in East Africa, concentrated primarily in the oil and gas, railways and roads, and other mining sectors.



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19. This map shows why the South China Sea could lead to the next World War

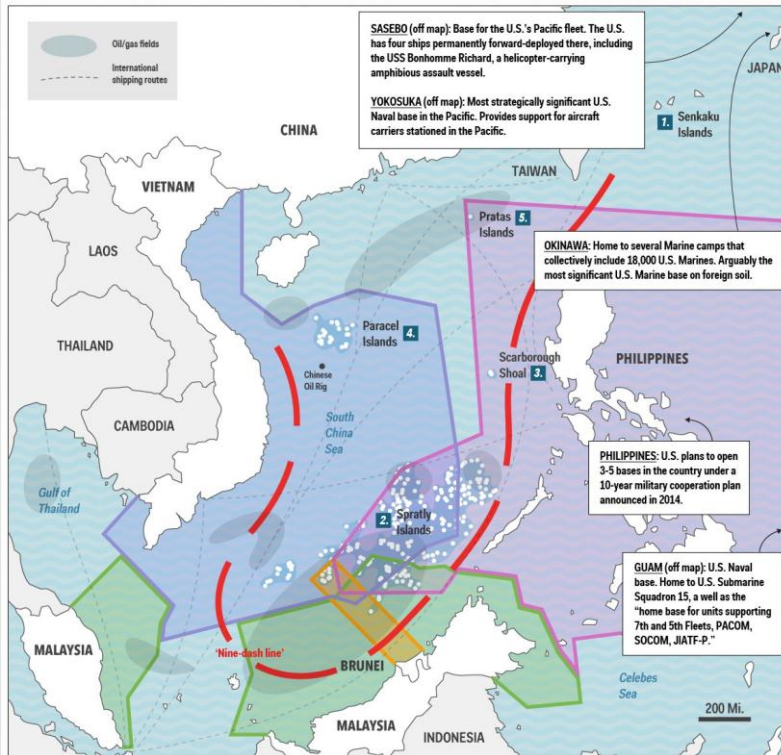
THE SOUTH CHINA SEA POWER STRUGGLE

U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL BY COUNTRY

| | |
|-------------|--------|
| JAPAN | 39,200 |
| SOUTH KOREA | 28,000 |
| SINGAPORE | 180 |
| PHILIPPINES | 140 |
| THAILAND | 140 |
| INDONESIA | 30 |

TERRITORIAL ISLAND CLAIMS (ALL/PARTIAL)

| | CHINA | BRUNEI | MALAYSIA | PHILIPPINES | VIETNAM |
|-------------------|-------|--------|----------|-------------|---------|
| Scarborough Shoal | ● | | | ● | |
| Paracel Islands | ● | | | | ● |
| Spratly Islands | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |



1. THE SENKAKU ISLANDS

Claimed by both China and Japan, they're viewed as a bellwether of the longtime rivals' relative power. China and Japan have repeatedly dispatched vessels to the waters around the islands over the past few years. Just as provocatively, China declared the islands to be part of a new civilian aircraft identification zone over the East China Sea, bluntly treating the islands as part of its exclusive territory.

In August and September 2012, an escalation of the Senkaku dispute triggered a wave of violent anti-Japanese protests in China, including demonstrations outside the Japanese embassy in Beijing.

2. THE SPRATLY ISLANDS

The oil- and gas-rich Spratlys are a checkerboard of competing territorial claims. China and the Philippines claim the islands, but Malaysia, Indonesia, and even tiny Brunei claim parts of the island chain and their surrounding waters as well.

3. SCARBOROUGH SHOAL

This island in a particularly rich fishing area is much closer to the Philippines than it is to China. That didn't stop Beijing from starting a major confrontation over Scarborough in April 2012.

4. THE PARACEL ISLANDS

In May, the oil-rich waters surrounding this island chain were the sight of an unprecedented Chinese escalation, when a platform from China's state oil company deployed inside Vietnam's exclusive economic zone. A second oil rig was sent to a somewhat less controversial part of the Paracels in June. But Chinese and Vietnamese ships have been frequently ramming one another near the first rig ever since its appearance in Vietnamese waters, and China's moves represent one of the biggest crises in the two countries' relations in decades.

5. THE PRATAS ISLANDS

Taiwan and China both claim them, although China also claims sovereignty over Taiwan more generally. The islands are home to a Taiwanese military outpost and even a civilian airport.

THE ACTUAL BOUNDARIES

All of these smaller points of tension are subsets of a larger and even more fundamental dispute among the South China Sea nations.

Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, a country's Exclusive Economic Zone "shall not extend beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured." In an EEZ, a country can extract natural resources, lay undersea cable, fish, and even construct artificial islands.