

# New York Times Editorial on South China Sea Misleading, Partial

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Region: [Asia](#)

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*A recent New York Times editorial that criticized China's rightful territorial claims in South China Sea is misleading by misconstruing and ignoring facts and international norms, said Ben Reynolds, a U.S. foreign policy analyst.*

*The Times editorial, "Playing Chicken in the South China Sea," accused China of escalating tensions between itself, its neighbors, and the United States.*

*The editorial has vastly overstated the importance of the South China Sea to an audience that is increasingly skeptical of overseas interventions, argued Reynolds in a column piece with China-US Focus, an open-platform website focusing on China-U.S. relations based in Hong Kong.*

## Overinflating the Sea's Importance

The editorial misstated and overly exaggerated the fact of the South China Sea being rich in resources, wrote Reynolds, pointing out that the only resource currently being extracted from the region in significant quantities is fish.

Regarding other energy resources like oil and natural gas, the vast majority of their reserves lie outside disputed areas according to the U.S. Energy Information administration, wrote the columnist.

Reynolds acknowledged the argument that the South China Sea is of vital strategic importance because it contains major trade flows is partially correct, but he argued that no party to the territorial disputes believes or suggests that China's claims pose a threat to peacetime trade.

## Ignoring Facts

The Times editorial blamed China's land reclamation and construction activities in the South China Sea as an "aggressive and outrageous tactic," but it ignored the fact that U.S. allies and partners involved in the dispute have also expanded or constructed islands in the South China Sea in recent years, argued Reynolds.

Reynolds continued his rebuttal on the Times' innuendo from bringing up China's rising military budget, noting that the editorial deliberately omitted the fact that the 2015 U.S. military budget was 601 billion U.S. dollars, more than three times than that of China.

Reynolds pointed out that the Times editors offered little criticism on the United States' own astronomical military budget and its deployments in the Asia-Pacific.

"I should not have to remind the reader, much less the editors of a major global newspaper, that the United States is not located in Asia," wrote Reynolds.

#### Mouthpiece For U.S. Interventionist Foreign Policy

Reynolds proceeded to point out the hypocrisy of the editorial's argument that China is attempting to dangerously revise the post-World War II international norms.

The argument ignored the fact that the post-war order in Asia was designed by the United States to hedge against the influence of the Soviet Union, wrote Reynolds. "It was not designed to promote freedom and democracy".

"Again, we see that the object of the Times' critique is not militarism, threatening behavior, or the revision of international norms as such...Rather, the Times is critiquing Chinese behavior because China is a geopolitical rival of the United States," wrote Reynolds.

Misleading the American people about U.S.-China rivalry in the South China Sea with omissions and half-truths is the job of the Defense Department, not the press, said Reynolds.

The New York Times has been on the wrong side of history in almost every proposed foreign intervention since World War II, which in its history endorsed the Vietnam War, the 2003 Iraq War, and the bombing of Libya, according to the columnist.

"Let us hope that the New York Times is more thorough and careful with the facts in future pieces, lest it sell the American public on yet another disastrous foreign intervention."

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