



## To counter China's maritime expansion, "We need to build up a fait accompli based on the law": Experts share their insights.

### The turbulent South China Sea

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5:00 AM, July 10, 2026 [Members-only article]

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Ten years have passed since the 2016 arbitration tribunal, based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, ruled against China's claims to sovereignty over the South China Sea. We asked experts how we should deal with China, which has continued its maritime expansion during this time.

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China, a " [maritime power](#)," [targets Japan and the Philippines, paving the way for the unification of Taiwan](#).

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### "Concerns about escalation of changing the status quo by force" - Professor Tomoaki Anan, Tohoku University

Even after the arbitration ruling, what China is doing in the seas is literally changing the status quo by force. These actions, which attempt to alter the sphere of influence by creating a fait accompli without following international legal procedures, are no different from Russia's aggression against Ukraine. It wouldn't be surprising if this escalates further at any moment.



Professor Tomoaki Anan of  
Tohoku University

However, given that the opposing party was a country that violated the rule of law, I don't think the Philippines' appeal to the arbitration court was in vain. This is because they raised the issue of China in full view of the international community. For example, in Europe, where the rule of law is highly valued, I feel that the arbitration ruling led to a widespread recognition that China had violated a taboo.

With human rights issues emerging in Hong Kong and Xinjiang, the image of China as a country that does not uphold the law or human rights has spread. While some countries want to maintain economic ties, some countries outside of Asia are beginning to distance themselves from China.

In this context, the negotiations between Japan and the Philippines to delimit their exclusive economic zones (EEZs), which they have agreed to begin, are significant. Sovereign states define their territories under the law, gain recognition from other countries, and give their definitions credibility. Just like arbitration rulings, continuously building up established facts based on the law should serve as a deterrent against China in the future.

**"The decline in U.S. confidence makes it harder to antagonize China," says Professor Christopher Hughes of the University of Warwick, UK.**

From a European perspective, China's maritime expansion is completely unacceptable. The European Union (EU) issued a statement supporting the arbitration court's ruling on the South China Sea issue. China's continued actions disregard the international order based on law and are contrary to European ideals.



Professor Christopher Hughes  
of the University of Warwick

Unfortunately, China is unlikely to cease its maritime expansion. The de facto closure of the Strait of Hormuz, caused by the military conflict between the United States, Israel, and Iran, will also have a negative impact. It has demonstrated that if a country that undermines maritime rights has the power, no one can stop it.

Asian countries, led by Japan, need to cooperate to deter China. Japan is strengthening its cooperation with many countries, including the Philippines, Vietnam, and South Korea.

Europe also has a strong awareness of security in the Indo-Pacific region, as evidenced by Britain's deployment of an aircraft carrier strike group to Japan in 2025. However, realistically, there are limits to what Europe can do.

With it becoming increasingly difficult to place the same level of trust in the Trump administration's United States, European countries are finding it harder to antagonize China. The extent to which they can provide support in times of crisis remains unclear. To deter China's expansion, it will be crucial for Asian countries to further strengthen their cooperation.

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- If you approach it seriously, everything becomes a turning point.
- Leveraging the combined strength of the group to achieve operating profit of 600 billion yen.
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### attention

- Initiatives by related companies to address aging infrastructure.
- Connecting Thailand and Japan through energy and shipping
- The "PMI" approach is crucial for M&A of small and medium-sized enterprises.

### business

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- Making scattered company data usable with AI
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