

Critical Studies of the Asia-Pacific

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Jonathan Spangler • Dean Karalekas
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Editors

Enterprises, Localities, People, and Policy in the South China Sea

Beneath the Surface

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PREFACE

Current scholarship on the South China Sea is dominated by discussions of three main issues: traditional security, resource economics, and international law. While these topics are undeniably at the heart of the maritime territorial disputes, the proliferation of such studies has overshadowed many of the other key issues influencing dynamics in the South China Sea and the region more broadly. *Enterprises, Localities, People, and Policy in the South China Sea: Beneath the Surface* goes beyond many of the analyses of maritime territorial disputes in today's academia.

As the title suggests, this volume takes readers "beneath the surface" of the South China Sea by exploring critical but under-researched issues related to the maritime territorial disputes. It draws attention to the importance of private sector, civil society, and subnational actors' perspectives and roles in the disputes and sheds light on key policy issues that are addressed less often in the literature. By going beyond mainstream analyses focused solely on issues of traditional security, resource economics, and international law, it aims to offer a fresh and engaging look at the South China Sea disputes.

The book is divided into five parts: historical foundations, enterprises, localities, people, and policy. In Chap. 1, Bill Hayton reveals the extent to which unreliable historical evidence, source material, and historiography have muddled contemporary analyses and understandings of the South China Sea. Focusing on three recent publications, he disentangles the web of historical references cited and unearths a concerning reality that many of today's discussions of South China Sea history are based upon a small

handful of writings by non-historians that “have come to form the backbone of ... conventional wisdom about the disputes.”

In Chap. 2, Jonathan Spangler argues that, as the world’s attention has focused on the ongoing rivalry between states in the South China Sea, constituents of the global defense industry have already emerged as the undisputed winners of the disputes. Offering an abundance of empirical evidence, he details their role as the key beneficiaries both in terms of material benefits such as immediate financial gains, future investment guarantees, and sub-industry creation and expansion and immaterial benefits such as securitization strategy prioritization and reduced relative risk.

In Chap. 3, Ian Rowen explores how Beijing has used tourism as a part of its overall strategic approach to the South China Sea in order to achieve political objectives. Using primary source material from the Chinese government and the tourism industry, he demonstrates how China has used tourism to strengthen its military and administrative grip on the maritime area as well as attempted to advance its historical narrative and cultural influence domestically and abroad.

In Chap. 4, Olga Daksueva and Joyce Juo-yu Lin investigate the role of Hainan province in Chinese decision-making and policy-making processes related to the South China Sea. They reveal that, despite decentralization and an increasingly high-profile role for the province, the autonomy of Hainan authorities regarding issues of low politics remains severely limited by the dominance of high politics and the central government’s use of “dual-leadership administration, financial subsidies, and other means” to guide the policy-making process.

Expanding upon the theme of localities, Mark Hendersen in Chap. 5, breaks away from conventional state-centric analyses by examining the roles of local governments in conflict deterrence and influencing national governments’ policy making related to the South China Sea. Arguing that local governments have a shared interest in cooperation to promote economic vitality and community well-being, he details how relevant exchanges, interaction, and cooperation between municipalities play a role in facilitating conflict prevention efforts.

In Chap. 6, Gregory Coutaz evaluates the potential for disaster response and emergency preparedness to serve as a foundation for mutual exchange and cooperative efforts in the South China Sea. He suggests that, due to its less politically sensitive nature, disaster management cooperation could also provide a stepping stone for further cooperation between rival claimants on more contentious issues facing the region.

In Chap. 7, Filippo Maranzana De Filippis considers the motivating factors behind the less complacent attitudes of the Philippines and Vietnam in taking a stand against perceived Chinese expansionism in disputed areas. He argues that, although their approaches have been different, the issues of demographics and geography have compelled them into action despite the significant risks.

In Chap. 8, Moises Lopes de Souza looks at how different concepts of confidence-building measures have led to contradictions in ASEAN's negotiating mechanisms for the South China Sea. He then assesses how internal constraints and other obstacles have hindered the transition from confidence-building measures to preventative diplomacy, finding that meaningful progress remains contingent upon a number of factors unlikely to emerge in the foreseeable future.

In Chap. 9, Dean Karalekas questions the predominant wisdom of Western scholars in analyzing Beijing's rhetoric and actions related to the South China Sea maritime territorial disputes, suggesting that predictions about China have been inaccurate due to their imposition of biased values and aspirations out of context. His critical reassessment of China's foreign policy actions in the South China Sea unravels some of the major reasons that China analysts continue to harbor flawed or incomplete understandings of the key actor in their research.

In Chap. 10, James Borton examines diplomatic issues in the South China Sea from the perspective of environmental science and marine conservation, arguing that science diplomacy is not only an urgent issue but also one that can provide a framework for regional cooperation. Highlighting the impact of environmental mismanagement on political and environmental security in the region, he advocates a concerted effort among scientific, legal, and diplomatic communities to simultaneously address both the environmental and geopolitical challenges that face the maritime region.

Taken together, the ten chapters in this volume aim to expand the scope of discussion on the South China Sea by bringing to the surface a diversity of key issues related to the maritime territorial disputes. These issues include historiography in the region, the global defense industry's role as beneficiary of the disputes, tourism as a territorial strategy, the roles of provinces and local governments, disaster management, confidence-building measures and preventative diplomacy, environmental and science diplomacy, and other topics seldom discussed in other analyses of the South China Sea disputes. By doing so, it aims to serve as an essential

companion to the more conventional studies and contribute to more inclusive scholarship on the disputes. The editors hope that the interdisciplinary content and fresh perspectives make the book an essential read not only for policymakers and those in the international relations community but also for all others interested in gaining a more well-rounded understanding of the many issues at stake in the South China Sea maritime territorial disputes.

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