

New Book – Asian Territorial and Maritime Disputes: A Critical Introduction

Written by Moises de Souza, Gregory Coutaz and Dean Karalekas

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MOISES DE SOUZA, GREGORY COUTAZ AND DEAN KARALEKAS, JUN 22 2022

This is an excerpt from *Asian Territorial and Maritime Disputes: A Critical Introduction*. You can download the book free of charge from E-International Relations.

This volume is designed to be a practical yet critical introduction to the main maritime and territorial disputes in the Indo-Pacific region. Through each chapter, the authors outline the foundations of each dispute, followed by an analytical discussion that will provide the reader with a more in-depth understanding, allowing them to go one step further beyond a mere descriptive perspective on these intricate geopolitical questions.

As with many geopolitical disputes, nationalistic passions arise from all sides. The editors of this volume have therefore endeavoured to provide the various opposing viewpoints on the disputes from a position of neutrality, with the intention of reaching a more sober and balanced account of the events involved. Given the editorial scope and inevitable space limitations, many other analytical possibilities could have been explored, but it was our primary intention to provide the necessary background information enabling the reader to grasp the conditions on the ground, and hence to be armed with the tools needed to confidently access more theoretical and technical studies on the subject of the region's nuanced maritime and territorial disputes.

Moreover, decisions were made regarding which of the region's many disputes to include, as it would not have been possible to cover all of the myriad territorial controversies in the Indo-Pacific. Questions related to Tibet's status; China's actions on the border with Bhutan; the contentious Socotra rock between South Korea and China; the controversial occupation of the Nepalese Rui Village by China; these are some examples of important territorial disputes that did not make the cut. While the editors recognize the importance of these conflicts, it was our intention to provide a book that offers the student of international relations and Indo-Pacific conflict an overview of the disputes with the geopolitical weight and strategic implications to threaten the peace and stability of the region, and that today have the potential to redraw the map. Eventually, we are hopeful that a second (or updated) volume will be able to help fill this gap.

The topics covered herein include the maritime and territorial disputes in the South China Sea and East China Sea. Gleice Miranda and Valentina Maljak provide the foundations of these conflicting and overlapping claims along with the important role played by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to better understand the legal complexities of each country's claims. At the same time, Leticia Simões outlines the important discussion concerning the role of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as a regional organization and its place as a possible mediator in the disputes.

The rationale and interpretations behind China and Japan's territorial disputes are discussed by specialists from these two countries. Yoichiro Sato and Astha Chadha offer a comprehensive analysis of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Island dispute between Japan and China using aspects of territorial and maritime sovereignty, international law, natural resource exploitation, and the role of the United States, as well as the geopolitical implications of the same. The Chinese rationale for the disputes in the East China Sea is described by Duan Xiaolin, who focuses his discussion on the general behavioural patterns of China's leaders in their quest for territorial integrity, additionally exploring the

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implications for the DSI dispute. Duan argues that the relative-gains concept and the instrumental value of disputed territories both fail to provide coherent explanations for China's territorial strategies. Rather, what matters most are the political meanings of disputed territories within the context of China's grand strategy.

The implications of the presence and interest of the United States in both disputes are analysed by Adam Gerval and Mark Henderson, who clarify how Washington sees its role in the region vis-à-vis the maritime claims of each nation involved. As much as the United States, the specificity of the presence of Taiwan's position is discussed by Dean Karalekas, who calls attention to the differences between the East and South China Sea claims pressed by Taipei and those by Beijing, despite their common origin. Going up to the Northeast part of the map, Serafettin Yilmaz offers a summary of the intricacies surrounding Japan's twin disputes with South Korea and Russia related to control over Dokdo/Takeshima Islands and Kuril Islands, respectively.

The territorial claims and counterclaims that so threaten peace and security in the region go beyond just island disputes. Mayuri Banerjee addresses the origin of the Sino-Indian border dispute, along with India's colonial legacy, and the factors that have contributed to the flare-ups of kinetic conflict along the frontier that have arisen in recent years. Finally, while the region is currently abundant in quarrels over territory, other disputes – equally complex – have nevertheless been resolved in the not-too-distant past, making them worthy of revisiting. Bhaso Ndzendze looks at the history of the Chinese methods of dealing with disagreements over sovereignty by examining three distinct case studies: Mongolia, Shandong, and Macau. Ndzendze explains that the Mongolian declaration of independence during the 1911 Xinhai Revolution, which brought down China's last imperial dynasty, remains the only successful case of secession by a former Chinese colony, and suggests that this event may hold clues to how disputes might be peacefully resolved today.

It is our hope that students and members of the general public will find this volume useful in their exploration of the many maritime and territorial disputes that help define the Asia-Pacific geopolitical landscape. Now, more than ever, it is necessary first to seek to understand the many facets of the contentious disagreements in the region, and the historical conditions that led to the predicament the region finds itself in today. This book is an effort in this direction.

About the author:

Moises de Souza obtained his PhD from the International Doctoral Program in Asia-Pacific Studies (IDAS) at Taiwan's National Chengchi University. Currently, he is Lecturer in Asia Pacific Studies at the School of Humanities, Language and Global Studies and Chair of the Northern England Policy Centre for the Asia Pacific (NEPCAP) at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan). He is also Researcher in Asia Studies at the International Relations Research Centre of the University of São Paulo (NUPRI-GEASIA) and deputy-director of the South China Sea Think Tank (SCSSTT). Additionally, he is also Asia Pacific Viewpoint Journal Editor-in-Chief (SCCI).

Gregory Coutaz is a Swiss political scientist. He holds an MA in Political Science from the University of Lausanne and a MAS in Asian Studies from the University of Geneva. Living in Taiwan since 2008, he received his PhD from the National Chengchi University and currently works as an Assistant Professor at the Department of Diplomacy and International Relations at Tamkang University. His major areas of research include comparative politics, conflict resolution, and non-traditional security. He is the author of *Coping with Disaster Risk Management in Northeast Asia* (2018).

Dean Karalekas is a research fellow at the Centre of Austronesian Studies at the University of Central Lancashire, having earned his PhD from the International Doctoral Program in Asia-Pacific Studies at Taiwan's National Chengchi University. He is the author of *The Men in No Man's Land: A Journey into Bir Tawil and Civil-Military Relations in Taiwan: Identity and Transformation*. He is also an ethnographic and narrative filmmaker, having produced, written and directed several award-winning films on a diversity of subjects, from the Canadian experience in World War II to indigenous mythology.

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