

While tackling the challenge of presenting Chinese thought as global theory, many of the contributors, including the editor, symptomatically express cautions through frequent usage of terms like “may,” “might,” “could,” “potential,” and “heuristic.” But are such self-reflexive gestures, rather than self-affirmative application of existing theory, not a necessary condition for opening up the possibility of “revers[ing] the historical directional arrow” (p. 4) and reinventing the way in which scholarly knowledge is produced and circulated? Jenco’s collective project has created such an interesting opening.

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*The South China Sea Dispute: Navigating Diplomatic and Strategic Tensions.*

Edited by Ian Storey and Lin Cheng-yi. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2016. Pp. xii + 305. ISBN 10: 9814695556; ISBN 13: 978-9814695558.

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The dispute in the South China Sea has attracted the interest and concern of the international community because of the importance of the maritime region affected. The salient features of the dispute are as follows: it contains a variety of legal and political issues intrinsically interrelated; there are states that claim sovereignty over maritime features and sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the maritime areas concerned (claimants), and their claims are founded on different grounds; and there are states that are not claimants, but which have economic or security interests in the South China Sea (non-claimants).

The arguments in this volume can be divided into four parts: First, a general overview of the dispute (Chapters 1 and 2); second, an examination of the claims of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan (Chapters 3 and 4), and the reactions of ASEAN to the accelerating conduct of the PRC and Taiwan (Chapters 5 and 6); third, an analysis of the arguments and circumstances of other principal claimants and the difficulties ASEAN faces in unifying the policies related to the South China Sea dispute because of the contradictory and conflicting interests among its members (Chapters 7, 8, and 9); and fourth, the interests of the non-claimants (Chapters 10, 11, and 12).

The first part (Chapters 1 and 2) sets the basic features of the South China Sea dispute; the recently escalating assertiveness of China in claiming its rights and interests on the basis of the nine-dash line and historic rights; and the reactions and concerns of other states, including claimants and non-claimants.

In the second part, Chapters 3 and 4 explain the decisive factors in the political approaches of the PRC and Taiwan respectively to the South China Sea dispute. Both the PRC and Taiwan have claimed sovereignty over the maritime features and the sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the maritime areas on the same grounds (i.e., the “nine-dash” line and historic rights), without clarifying their precise meanings and implications, particularly in accordance with the relevant provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and both implemented their respective assertive approach as a result of changes in their policies in the early 1990s. However, the backgrounds of and reasons for their escalating assertiveness are different. The PRC has become even more assertive since 2009 because of its interests in exploiting marine resources, the policy of the U.S. to turn toward Asia and to collude with South East Asian states, and internal political confrontations. These factors also explain the PRC’s preference for a bilateral approach and the refusal of “internationalization” or

“multilateralism” in settling the dispute. It is also pointed out that Beijing, at least at the official level, has never taken the view that the South China Sea constitutes the PRC’s core interest, a notion regarding which the PRC has made it clear that it will not tolerate any external interference. In the analysis of Taiwan’s evolving policy toward the South China Sea dispute between 1992 and 2016, it is explained that, while the government has enhanced its territorial claims in the South China Sea under the administration of successive presidents, it has also strengthened its cooperation with other stakeholders to settle the dispute peacefully. This reflects the significance of the “One China” principle of the PRC and Taiwan’s policy on the cross-straits relations in their decisions regarding the South China Sea dispute.

Chapters 5 and 6 examine the attitudes of Southeast Asian states toward the increasing assertiveness of the PRC in the South China Sea dispute. These arguments clearly illustrate the complexity of the South China Sea dispute that involves both internal and international concerns of the PRC, respective ASEAN members, and the policy of the U.S. concerning the Asian region.

In the third part, Chapter 7 examines the security interests and perspectives of the Philippines in the South China Sea dispute. Aileen Baviera illustrates the dynamics of the internal politics of the Philippines, which are significantly influenced by the context of the changes occurring in the international system, the evolving threat perceptions of the PRC, and the Philippines’ conceptions of national interest. For the Philippines, the security alliance with the U.S. and the role of regional mechanisms significantly influence its domestic politics. Chapter 8 analyzes, from the Vietnamese perspective, the reasons for the PRC’s assertive attitude in the South China Sea, in particular since 2008 and the impacts of this on regional and international security. In Chapter 9, it is stated that Malaysia’s interests in the South China Sea dispute are partly driven by its resource access and economic security but are, even more fundamentally, rooted in its sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the stark realities of geography. Exploring ways of settling the South China Sea dispute within the framework of ASEAN, Malaysia has maintained a non-aligned foreign policy stance and has balanced its relations with the PRC and the U.S.

In the fourth part, the interests and reactions of the U.S. and Japan, the principal non-claimants, are discussed. In Chapter 10, Denny Roy points out that the U.S.’s interest in the South China Sea is focused on stability, freedom of navigation, upholding international law, and maintaining the U.S.-sponsored regional security order; and that none of these interests are inherently anti-China. Rather, there was a shift in U.S. policy to emphasize the Asia-Pacific region by the Obama Administration, which has resulted in competition with a rising China. Because of the conflicts of interest in U.S.-PRC relations, and the major concerns that constitute the vital interests of the respective states in their relations, the U.S. remains a decisive player in the South China Sea dispute. Following an analysis of U.S. policy toward the Asia-Pacific region, the developments in U.S.-ASEAN relations concerning the South China Sea dispute are examined in Chapter 11. In response to the increasing assertiveness of the PRC and escalating tensions in the dispute over the South China Sea, ASEAN started to invite the U.S. to participate in several regional forums. Yann-huei Song describes the difficulties ASEAN members have faced in their efforts to achieve a common stand on the South China Sea dispute in the negotiations between the PRC and ASEAN since the early 1990s. The escalation of tensions in the South China Sea dispute, particularly since 2008, has allowed the U.S. to enhance further its involvement in the security issues of the region and to upgrade its bilateral relationships with respective ASEAN members. In Chapter 12, Yoichiro Sato discusses the economic and strategic interests of Japan in the South China Sea dispute and the implications for matters in the East China Sea.

Ian Storey concludes the volume by pointing out the difficulties of a political or legal resolution to the dispute in the near future, because of, he notes: a) the importance of the South China Sea for global maritime trade, peace and stability; b) the complicated factors accelerating the tensions; c) the

further enhancement of the PRC's military capabilities; d) the unforeseeable prospects of the implementation of the DOC and the negotiations for the Code of Conduct (COC); and e) the PRC's refusal of the arbitral proceedings commenced by the Philippines.

It is necessary to point out some problems with phrasing and terminology. First, the territorial issue between Japan and South Korea is indicated by the phrase “Dokdo/Takeshima Reef” on page 12. Although the two states have taken different views even with regard to the existence of a “territorial dispute” itself, they concur that the “Dokdo/Takeshima” is “comprised of two ‘islands’ and numerous small islands.”<sup>1</sup> Second, one of the most important motives of the publication of this volume was the unilateral reference by the Philippines of the South China Sea dispute against the PRC to the Arbitral Tribunal constituted in accordance with Annex VII of the UNCLOS. Rather ambiguous expressions referring to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) are found on several pages (pp. 118, 166, 175, 218, 219, 239, and 293). Third, it was on 4 November 2002 that the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN and the PRC adopted the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties, also known as the “DOC.” The DOC is considered to constitute the basis for the negotiations for the COC with legally binding effect. It is true that ASEAN adopted the Declaration on the South China Sea in 1992, but the 1992 declaration is commonly referred to as the Manila Declaration; it is not the DOC itself (pp. 138 and 176).

Of course, these small semantic problems could never detract from the academic significance of this volume. The arguments in the book, taken together, successfully and effectively show the complicated nature of the South China Sea dispute, which is not only concerned with economic and strategic interests but also related to matters of sovereignty and nationalism. Moreover, it is clearly illustrated that the realities of the dispute have behind them a variety of international, regional, and internal factors related to the respective states, including claimants and non-claimants, which have made the settlement of this dispute more difficult and unpredictable. Although two years have passed since its publication, it is possible to say that the analysis in this volume remains valid and generates insightful perspectives on the dispute and explains the respective responses and positions of the claimants, non-claimants and ASEAN to the Arbitral Award of 12 July 2016 in the *South China Sea Arbitration* and the negotiations afterwards.

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*The Red Guard Generation and Political Activism in China.*

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*The Red Guard Generation and Political Activism in China* is Guobin Yang's second single-authored book, succeeding *The Power of the Internet in China: Citizen Activism Online* (2009). Although both books share a common interest in political activism conducted by ordinary Chinese citizens, there is a major difference: in his new book, Yang focuses on historical materials on the Cultural Revolution-era Red Guard movement, the sent-down youth, and the wave of protest from 1976 to 1980, rather than

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.mofa.go.jp/a\\_o/na/takeshima/page1rwe\\_000014.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/na/takeshima/page1rwe_000014.html) and <http://dokco.mofa.go.kr/eng/introduce/location.jsp> (last accessed on 27 December 2017).