



The South China Sea Dispute: Increasing Stakes and Rising Tensions

By Clive Schofield, Ian Storey

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Tensions are on the rise in the South China Sea. Longstanding sovereignty disputes over the profusion of atolls, shoals, and reefs that dot the 1.2 million square miles of sea, allied to extensive overlapping claims to maritime space, have been a source of serious interstate contention over the years, especially during the 1990s. Tensions eased briefly in the first half of this decade, due in part to China's more accommodating and flexible attitude, which was part of a diplomatic "charm offensive" toward Southeast Asia intended to assuage regional anxieties over the country's growing economic, political, and military clout. Over the past several years, however, China has reverted to a more assertive posture in consolidating its jurisdictional claims, expanding its military reach, and seeking to undermine the claims of other states through coercive diplomacy.

The South China Sea Dispute critically assesses the contentious sovereignty disputes and provides insights into the sources of growing tension in the region.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Clive Schofield is a QEII research fellow and associate professor at the Australian Centre for Ocean Resource and Security, University of Wollongong, Australia, where he is director of research. **Ian Storey** is a fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in Singapore, where he is the editor of the journal *Contemporary Southeast Asia*.

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