

# The Evolution of the South China Sea Disputes

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# Introduction

- Long history of the study of the dispute
- Recent interest. Why? How did the issue come to this point?

## Structure

- History of the dispute: patterns in time
- Narratives crystallization and critical dates
- interest in the area across time
- Colonial legacies and nation-building process

# Claimants' activities in the area: patterns in time

- First: the imperial past
- Second: Western powers and Japan until the Second World War
- Third: the Cold War
- Fourth: the energy incentive
- Fifth: a) rules, norms and codes b) national laws c) internationalization d) China's activities

# Narratives crystallization and critical dates of the dispute

- process of consolidation of each claim through time: China-Taiwan, Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei
- Task of identifying the start of the dispute at a certain point in the past
- Critical date. When? 1887, 1933, 1939, 1952, 1956, 1984, 1988, 1995, 1999, 2002
- nationalist sentiments, emotional attachment & personal bias= preferences in narratives

# Interest in the area across time

factors contributing to “securitize” the dispute

1. geographical nature of the area
2. economic value through time
3. nationalist and patriotic sentiments
4. ideology and the force the Cold War and decolonization
5. military importance of the area
6. evolution of International Law

# **Colonial legacies and nation-building process as related with the disputes**

Events shaped by the past, the colonial legacy, and the process of nation-building

Case 1: Brunei and Malaysia over their maritime boundary

Case 2: Malaysia and the Philippines' dispute for islands sovereignty and their maritime border (KIG & North Borneo)

# The role of history in the future of the dispute

- Limitations in proposing creative solutions
- Historians as centrifugal forces against agreements
- Much more realist choices: shelving, third party & negotiations

but...

# Ideas on how to better understand the present and future of a dispute

- attention to sea economic activities performed by local residents
- historical precedents of proposals for dispute settlement by international arbitration
- critical date of the disputes
- historical analysis over the issue of “islands vs archipelagos”
- Digging into the history of sea activities by Philippine, Malay & Brunei individuals



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Thank you!