

An Analysis of PRC Claims towards Disputed Territories in the South China Sea

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This presentation intends to examine the rhetoric of the People's Republic of China in regards to its maritime claims in the South China Sea. The South China Sea covers 648,000 square miles of the Pacific Ocean, has rich fishing resources, and is believed to have stockpiles of oil and natural gas. The perceived value of this area has led to these islands becoming highly contested, and thus the PRC and several of its neighbors are in dispute over small islands, shoals, and reefs in the region. This research aims to explore if the claims of the PRC have changed in any significant way by examining the differences in the rhetoric it has used over that time. This will be done through an examination of both Chinese language documents and their respective English translations that the PRC government has released from 1949 to the present day. If no suitable English translation could be found for a certain document, this research project in turn translates the certain document into English. While examining these documents, this project observes two important issues. 1.) "What is the specific claim that China is making towards the islands?" and 2.) "How the PRC believes the dispute should be settled?" This presentation will report on the findings for the two issues as well as their implications. With the frequency of released statements never being higher in any decade than the 2010's, analysis of PRC memorandums and statements will continue to be significant.