

Water Conflicts and Maritime Security Challenges in 21st Century Asia

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ZENIT

tab edizioni

© 2024 Gruppo editoriale Tab s.r.l.
viale Manzoni 24/c
00185 Roma
www.tabedizioni.it

Prima edizione novembre 2024
ISBN versione cartacea 979-12-5669-023-7
ISBN versione digitale 979-12-5669-024-4
ISSN 2974-5330

È vietata la riproduzione, anche parziale,
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Introduction

Iram Naseer Ahmad, Federico Paolini

The seas and oceans of the globe are at a critical crossroads in their history. The intensities of transformation caused by the internationalization of the world economy remain to contribute to the major areas of ocean worth, coastal administration and management issues are turning into wider and very plentiful. In this backdrop, this book volume contributes in-depth investigation of ocean conflict, governance and strategy from an interdisciplinary context, involving an immense spectrum of features of correlations between the oceans and seas on the one hand, the intensities of transformation caused by the internationalization of the world economy remain to contribute to the major areas of ocean worth endeavors on the other, but this research examines the marine conflicts in the Asia in particular (Liu, 2014). Thanks to the enlightening anecdotes of Kishore Mahbubani, *The Great Convergence: Asia, The West and the Logic of One World* (Mahbubani, 2014), *The Asian 21st Century*, *The New Asian Hemisphere*, *The irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East* (Mahbubani, 2009), and Parag Khanna's book, *The Future is Asians: Global Order in the Twenty-first Century* (Khanna, 2019), which provided an insight about Asia beyond border and land conflicts. As the key claims in these narratives that Asians are back in their old civilizations, and 21st Century will be the Asian Century. But the considerable part about a maritime future in Asia is missing and needs further deliberation. Therefore, it is very important to debate on the *Water Conflicts and maritime challenges in 21st Century Asia* (Erickson & Goldstein, 2012).

The core questions of this book volume are that what are the maritime conflicts in Asian oceanic regions like the Indian Ocean, Arctic

Ocean and Indo-Pacific Ocean? And how far major global and regional players in Asia has potential to address the key maritime disputes in this age of nuclear technology to secure the future of the planet Earth, including marine life, water pollution and climate change in Asian Hemisphere. In the coming years, international maritime disputes are most likely to result from one of four areas: the pursuit of living resources like fish; climate change and pollution are likely to play significant roles in stimulating maritime conflict in 21st Century. These areas have either caused conflicts in the past, or their potential for producing future conflicts appears to be elevating. While each of these five areas is associated with a desire to claim more ocean space and to get more resources from the waters or seabed, conflict over these resources does not always manifest itself in the same ways. For example, conflicts among China, India and regional players over Indian Ocean: Russian desire to control natural resources of Arctic Ocean, China and Japan's efforts to assert ownership of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in Indo-Pacific Ocean and constant disputes on South China Sea have resulted in maritime exercises and a real fear of escalation. Likewise, the dispute over the artificial reef in Gibraltar reflected deeper tensions between the UK and Spain over the sovereignty of Gibraltar and its surrounding waters. The incident was one of several conflicts between the two countries over the years, and it highlights the difficulties that can arise when two states have competing claims for the same maritime territory (Sakhuja & Chan, 2016). International law provides a framework for resolving such disputes, but it's challenging to implement, particularly when emotions and nationalism are involved. In the end, resolving international maritime disputes requires political will and cooperation from all sides, as well as a commitment to peaceful and legal means of resolving conflicts. International maritime disputes are a common occurrence in the history of maritime conflict, and a display of force often characterizes them rather than actual violence. They serve as exceptions to democratic peace theory, as they often occur between democratic states, and are often one-sided, with only one government being directly involved. However, most incidents usually resolved through diplomatic means, with the involved parties negotiating to find a peaceful solution to the dispute (Valencia,

Van Dyke & Ludwig, 1997). These disputes can arise for a variety of reasons, including conflicting claims to fishing rights, disputes over jurisdiction and sovereignty, and differing interpretations of international maritime law. The law of the sea, as established by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), provides a framework for resolving these disputes, but it is not always clear or easily applied in every case (Hong, 2012). In recent years, there has been an increase in maritime disputes in various parts of the world, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, where territorial claims and overlapping Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) have led to increased tensions between coastal states. Maritime disputes can also arise from conflicting interpretations of international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which sets out the legal framework for the use and management of the world's oceans (Beckman, 2013). UNCLOS defines the rights and responsibilities of states in their use of the world's oceans, establishing guidelines for the delimitation of maritime boundaries and the management of marine resources. However, different states may interpret UNCLOS differently, leading to conflicting claims over resources and territory. Another factor that can contribute to maritime disputes is the competition for natural resources, such as fish stocks and minerals, as well as energy resources, such as oil and natural gas. As these resources become increasingly scarce, states may seek to secure access to them by expanding their maritime boundaries or challenging the claims of other states (Klein, 2017). This can lead to disputes over who may exploit these resources, and can even lead to military confrontations. Maritime disputes arise from a combination of legal, economic, and environmental factors, and can have serious implications for the stability of relationships between states. The challenge in implementing UNCLOS is the determination of maritime boundaries (Beckman, 2013). The treaty provides guidelines for delimiting maritime boundaries, but determining these boundaries can be complex and contentious, particularly when the interests of different states are in conflict. This can lead to disputes over the exploitation of marine resources, such as oil and gas, or the management of fish stocks (Zhang, 2018). Another challenge in implementing UNCLOS is the management of living and nonliving

resources in the oceans. The treaty offers for the conservation and sustainable use of these resources, but it also recognizes the need for cooperation among states to achieve this goal. This requires states to work together to develop and implement effective management strategies, and to resolve conflicts that may arise over the use of these resources.

Besides, Brahma Chellaney mentioned in his work that in persuading living resources like fish, conflicts can arise when countries compete for limited stocks of fish in the same waters. This can cause overfishing, which can negatively affect the sustainability of fish populations and harm the livelihoods of local fishers. Similarly, conflicts can arise over persuading non-living resources like oil, as countries seek to claim exclusive economic zones or continental shelves to access these resources (Chellaney, 2013). Pollution is also a major concern, as activities like oil spills or dumping of waste can harm marine ecosystems and create tensions between countries that share the same waters. Climate change is another issue that is likely to create conflicts, as rising sea levels and changing ocean currents could alter the distribution of resources and lead to disputes over usage. Disputes over sovereignty of uninhabited islands or rocks can also lead to conflicts, as countries seek to assert their rights and claim exclusive control over these territories. Sometimes, these disputes can cause the deployment of military forces and heighten tensions between countries. For example, disagreements on territorial or maritime issues do not always lead to conflict, and it is always desirable to seek peaceful resolution of such disputes. The form and intensity of actions taken by a country in such disputes can depend on a variety of factors, including the history of the conflict, the strategic importance of the disputed area, the political and economic interests of the countries involved, and the international legal framework (Chellaney, 2014). With Spain and Gibraltar, the two countries have a long history of dispute over the status of the territory, but have avoided escalation to armed conflict. The peaceful protest by Spanish fishers is an example of a non-violent form of protest aimed at highlighting their grievances and asserting Spain's claims to the waters around Gibraltar (Huang & Billo, 2014). The dispute between China and Japan over the Diaoyu/Sankaku Islands is more complex and has been ongoing for many years.