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The South China Sea is a major strategic waterway for trade and oil shipments to Japan, Korea as well as southern China. It has been the focus of a maritime dispute which has continued now for over six decades, with competing claims from China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia and Brunei. Recently China has become more assertive in pressing its claims – harassing Vietnamese fishing vessels and seizing reefs in the Philippine claim zone. China has insisted that it has "indisputable sovereignty" over the area and has threatened to enforce its claim. All of this is unsettling and draws in the United States which is concerned about freedom of navigation in the area. The US has been supporting the Philippines and has been developing security ties with Vietnam as a check upon China. This book examines the conflict potential of the current dispute, it discusses how the main claimants and the United States view the issue, and assesses the prospects for a resolution of the problem.



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