South China Sea Dispute

Prelims – *Current events of International Importance*

Mains (GSI) & (GS II) | *Geography of the World* **|** *International relations*

Why in News?

China and the Philippines have displayed their national flags in competing photo opportunities on a disputed sandbank in the South China sea.

- **Recent Disputed area -** Sandy Cay, which is part of the disputed Spratly Islands.
- Beijing calls it as ***Tiexian Reef.***
- **Dispute happened after -** The US and the Philippines launched their annual joint military drills called “Balikatan”, or “shoulder to shoulder”.

South China Sea dispute

- **South China Sea** – It is a marginal sea of the Western Pacific Ocean.
- It is bounded in the
    - North by South China,
    - West by the Indochinese Peninsula,
    - East by the islands of Taiwan and northwestern Philippines (mainly Luzon, Mindoro and Palawan), and
    - South by Borneo, eastern Sumatra and the Bangka Belitung Islands
- It stretches from the ***Strait of Malacca*** in the southwest to the ***Strait of Taiwan*** in the northeast.
- The South China Sea dispute involves overlapping territorial and maritime claims by several countries.
- **Involved Countries -** China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan.
- The core of the dispute lies in China's broad claim to the region, using its ***"nine-dash line"*** to demarcate its sovereignty including the Paracel and Spratly Islands, which overlaps with the claims of other nations.
- **Strategic Importance of the area** – It holds rich natural resources, significant maritime trade routes, and the presence of islands and reefs, which are also sources of contention.
- **International Law** - The dispute has been subject to international legal proceedings, such as the Permanent Court of Arbitration's ruling in 2016, which largely rejected China's claims.



Reference

[The Guardian | South China Sea Dispute]

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