

Taiwan could play role in resolving S. China Sea dispute



Taipei, Sept. 8 (CNA) The Republic of China (Taiwan) could play an important role in resolving the South China Sea dispute as it was the ROC that first claimed sovereignty over the region and it still has many historic documents on the issue, a visiting UK expert said on Friday.

“I think Taiwan could play a really important role in resolving the dispute. Because of course the claim really started with the ROC in the early 20th century,” said Bill Hayton, an associate fellow at Chatham House, an international policy institute based in London.

In addition, many of the historic archives are still stored in Taiwan, where political openness makes it easier to discuss sovereignty claims than in China or Vietnam, he noted.

By presenting its historic documents on the South China Sea, Hayton said Taipei could demonstrate that the more exaggerated claims made by Beijing are not supported by the historical evidence.

Such an approach could take some of the heat out of the

dispute, he told the Central News Agency on Friday.

Hayton also said it is clear Taiwan has occupied Taiping Island or Itu Aba for 70 years, noting “clearly you have the best claim to that feature.”

Hayton said that President Tsai-Ing-wen’s proposal to make the island an international humanitarian relief and resupply base is “a good way and good step to reduce tension.”

However, all claimants still need to have practical discussions on how to realize such a proposal, he added.

Hayton told CNA that to resolve the dispute everybody has to be “realistic” and recognize that no country is going to get 100 percent of what it wants.

He made the remarks on the sideline of a seminar organized by the South China Sea Think Tank (SCSTT) in Taipei on Friday. SCSTT is a Taipei-based non-profit organization that promotes dialogue, research, and education on South China Sea related issues.

In his lecture titled “The Modern Origins of China’s Claims in the South China Sea,” Hayton argued that the current tensions in the area can be traced back to the origins of China’s claims in the early 20th century. He presented evidence that China’s claim to islands in the South China Sea was made in 1909 and further expanded after 1933.

He argued that the claim is more modern than ancient as often claimed by China and has developed in response to domestic political crises.

(By Joseph Yeh)

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