

# Chinese Maritime Strategy and Energy Cooperation in the East China Sea

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## Abstract

Why has China pursued self-help in the extraction of energy resources in the East China Sea rather than cooperate with Japan? In 2008, it appeared that the two Asian powers had taken a decisive step toward cooperation on energy issues. But the much-heralded 2008 Principled Consensus was never implemented and today, tensions in the East China Sea threaten to explode into violent conflict. This article examines two prominent arguments for the lack of cooperation despite numerous overlapping interests. First, many observers argue that a security dilemma has arisen between China and Japan, complicating efforts to stabilize the relationship. However, this argument fails to explain why China and Japan cooperate in some areas but not in others. Second, the idea that popular nationalists restrain the options available to CCP leadership is increasingly prominent. This proposition is both understudied and unconvincing, given the impressive control the state exercises over political life in China. This article examines a third factor: the strategic beliefs of China's leadership. The blue water ambitions of the People's Liberation Army Navy led the Communist Party to treat the East China Sea as a strategically vital zone. Cooperation with a maritime rival is thus ruled out for reasons of national security.

## Introduction

Why has China pursued self-help in the extraction of energy resources in the East China Sea rather than cooperate with Japan? In 2008, it appeared as though the two Asian powers had taken a decisive step toward cooperation on energy issues. But the much-heralded 2008 Principled Consensus was never implemented. Today, tensions in the East China Sea could flare up into outright conflict as Chinese national oil companies unilaterally extract oil and gas from the seabed of the East China Sea and ship it directly to industrial centers along the country's southeast coast.<sup>1</sup>

There are several factors that would seem to argue in favor of cooperation. China and Japan are economically interdependent. Liberal internationalist theory holds that states are concerned with absolute gains, and therefore economic interdependence should lead to cooperation in areas of mutual interest and reduce incentives for conflict.<sup>2</sup> The energy security strategies of China and Japan overlap in many ways. Both seek to diversify sources of fossil fuels and ensure against supply disruption. East China Sea reserves could act as a hedge against the risks associated with Middle East imports.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the exploitation of offshore reserves is an area in which the two countries have cooperated in the past, notably in the Pinghu Field. Today, they exchange technology, finance, and expertise on issues ranging from energy efficiency to nuclear safety.<sup>4</sup> Finally, both countries have an interest in resolving the dispute: an agreement on cooperation could reduce tensions and allow for the return of private capital, technology, and expertise.<sup>5</sup>

### *Why Cooperation between China and Japan is Plausible*

Liberal international relations theory puts great emphasis on the economic interactions of states. Economic interdependence, represented by levels of trade and investment, raises the costs of war and should therefore reduce incentives for conflict. Neoliberal theory holds that economic cooperation allows states to advance mutual interests through absolute gains. Moreover, security is envisioned as incorporating not just military, but economic, energy, and environmental security as well. Scholars have used the liberal and neoliberal frameworks to argue that the states of Northeast Asia have more to gain from economic cooperation than a focus on relative gains. They point to the proliferation of institutions since the turn of the century as evidence of the increasingly liberal worldviews of China, Korea, and Japan and, in turn, a reason to expect increased economic cooperation.<sup>6</sup>

What would cooperation on energy in the East China Sea look like? Japanese cooperation with South Korea provides an example of cooperation between two states with historical and territorial issues on the development of a strategic resource in a disputed maritime zone. In 1974, the two countries drafted two agreements, one on the delimitation of maritime borders and the other on joint development in a disputed zone. The second agreement led to

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<sup>1</sup> The title "Principled Consensus" comes from the English translation of the Chinese-language document. No equivalent term is used in the Japanese text.

<sup>2</sup> Hveem and Pempel, "China's Rise and Economic Interdependence," 197; Pempel, "Introduction: The economic-security nexus," 1-24.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of Chinese oil policy and hedging; see: Tunsjo, *Security and Profit in China's Energy Policy*, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> "Japan, China agree to cooperate," June 7, 2016; *JICA's Assistance for Environmental Protection in China*; MOFA Japan, "Japan's Environmental Cooperation for China."

<sup>5</sup> Liao, "The Petroleum Factor in Sino-Japanese Relations," 41; Spegele, "South China Sea Tensions," July 12, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Pempel, "Introduction: The economic-security nexus," 19; Pempel, "Regional Institutions and the economic-security nexus," 146-163; Iida, "Trilateral dialogue in Northeast Asia," 164-188.

seven exploration missions at three sites between 1980 and 1986. Ultimately, the sites proved to be too expensive to develop, and the search was abandoned.<sup>7</sup>

In terms of Sino-Japanese cooperation, implementation of the 2008 Principled Consensus would be a start. The 2008 Consensus contained four understandings. First, it established a joint development zone that straddled the median line proposed by Japan to settle the disputed maritime border. Second, it opened up the development of the Chunxiao/Shirabaka Field<sup>8</sup> to the participation of Japanese companies under Chinese domestic law. Third, the two countries agreed to “select sites for joint development by mutual agreement and conduct joint development at the sites based on the principle of mutual benefit.”<sup>9</sup> Fourth, the two countries agreed to hold further consultations to determine sites for development and to work toward a bilateral agreement.<sup>10</sup>

From the very beginning, the two sides held different views on the interpretation of the agreement. Japan argued that it called for cooperation on development in all disputed areas of the East China Sea, while China claimed a narrower interpretation. When China continued to develop west of the median line without Japanese participation, Japan accused the Chinese of violating the agreement. For two years, sporadic consultations failed to move the two countries toward implementation.<sup>11</sup> Finally, the 2010 trawler incident, when Japanese authorities detained the captain of a Chinese fishing boat that had attempted to ram a Japanese coast guard vessel within the territorial waters of the Senkaku Islands, ended further discussions on implementation of the agreement. Today, the Government of Japan counts 16 Chinese structures involved in the development of natural resources in the East China Sea (on the Chinese side of the proposed median).<sup>12</sup>

### *The Limits of Existing Arguments Against Cooperation*

There are a number of arguments against cooperation between China and Japan. Neorealists cite the difficulty of cooperation under anarchy. Neorealism deals exclusively with the structure of the international system and uses the concept of the security dilemma to explain how competition can arise between two states even when cooperation would appear to benefit both. As a result of a power shift as China rises relative to Japan, some scholars argue that this type of security dilemma has developed in Sino-Japanese relations. An ensuing arms race has exacerbated feelings of insecurity and further lowered incentives to cooperate.<sup>13</sup>

The neorealist argument fails in several ways. First, observers dispute the existence of an arms race. Second, the structural argument fails to explain why China and Japan choose to cooperate on some issues and not others. For instance, in 1997 the two successfully implemented an agreement on fishing rights near the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands.<sup>14</sup> Finally, it fails to account for the contingent nature of the decline in China-Japan relations. The relationship since the end of the Cold War has seen both periods of decline and improvement, often in response to specific events or as the result of reconciliatory efforts by leadership in both states.

Since the end of the Cold War, observers have cited nationalism as the source of poor Sino-Japanese relations. According to this argument, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)

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<sup>7</sup> Drifte, “Territorial Conflicts in the East China Sea,” May 25, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Hereafter, the Chunxiao Field.

<sup>9</sup> MOFA Japan, “Japan-China Joint Press Statement,” June 18, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Drifte, “Territorial Conflicts in the East China Sea,” May 25, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> See also, Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, *Over the Line*.

<sup>13</sup> For a representative example, see: Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma,” 167-214.

<sup>14</sup> Hereafter, I refer to these islands using only the more familiar name, the Senkaku Islands.

actively developed anti-Japanese nationalism as a tool of unification and mobilization to fill a political vacuum left by the collapse of Communism in the wake of the Cold War. While the ensuing Patriotic Education Campaign successfully inculcated young Chinese with loyalty to party and country, these popular nationalists also came to expect certain behavior from party leadership. Nationalists are able to voice their displeasure through protest in the open and on the internet. Party leaders, protective of their legitimacy, feel that they must respond to nationalists or risk a second Tiananmen Square. In this way, nationalism restricts the choices available to party leadership. In particular, pragmatic compromise with Japan in areas of mutual interest is ruled out by the need to demonstrate nationalist credentials through the defense of China's territorial integrity, extended to the East China Sea with the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1996. This nationalist narrative fails on two counts. First, it overestimates the roles of nationalism and the internet in restricting the options available to an authoritarian state. Second, it fails to explain why China has willingly settled some territorial disputes and not others. Given the Party's narrative of foreign predation and its role in national reunification, territorial boundaries should be "basically nonnegotiable."<sup>15</sup> And yet, the CCP has settled 17 of 23 territorial disputes, often to China's disadvantage.<sup>16</sup>

The specifically anti-Japanese orientation of Chinese nationalism is also not a satisfactory explanation. China also maintains territorial disputes with a number of Southeast Asian countries in the South China Sea. The nationalist argument leaves open the question of why the combination of energy and maritime disputes seems to make for intractable conflict.

#### *A New Argument: Neoclassical Realism and the Role of Strategic Beliefs*

I turn to the best explanation for non-cooperation: the strategic beliefs of China's leadership. I argue that China's decision to pursue self-help is the result of the Chinese Communist Party's treatment of the East China Sea as a strategically vital area. Specifically, I look at the influence of the People's Liberation Army Navy on party thinking toward its near seas and the determination that maritime control is crucial to the country's national, economic, and energy security. The strategic importance lent to these zones rules out cooperation with potential adversaries and encourages self-help. This proposition also helps explain why the East China Sea is an exception in otherwise significant Sino-Japanese economic and energy cooperation. Neoclassical realism provides a framework for understanding the role of strategic beliefs in determining foreign policy. Neoclassical realism holds that the structure of international relations creates pressures and sets limits on the actions available to policymakers. Structural inputs, such as China's economic growth and the strengthening U.S.-Japan alliance, are filtered through domestic institutions, interest groups, and shared elite-level perceptions which work together to determine a state's foreign policy.<sup>17</sup>

#### *Historical Background*

The Senkaku Islands have been linked to the potentially rich hydrocarbon reserves buried beneath the East China Sea since the People's Republic of China first disputed Japan's sovereignty over the islands in 1971. Due to the timing, most observers believe that the Chinese claim was motivated by a 1968 United Nations commissioned survey that found potentially significant oil and gas reserves buried beneath the East China Sea.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Fravel, "Regime Insecurity and International Cooperation," 47.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Elman, "Realism," 11-21.

<sup>18</sup> Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, *Annual Report*, 1968; Drifte, *Japanese-Chinese Territorial Disputes*, August 2008.

The Senkaku Island chain consists of eight small, uninhabited islands. They lie 200 nautical miles (nm) east of mainland China and 240 nm southwest of Okinawa.<sup>19</sup> Due to their location along critical sea lines of communication and nearby seabed resources, these islands hold strategic and economic importance incommensurate with their size. In 1971, China claimed the islands on the grounds that Japan gained control over them after the first Sino-Japanese War and therefore must be returned under the terms of the 1952 San Francisco Peace Treaty. Japan claims that it legally acquired the islands as unincorporated territory prior to the end of the first Sino-Japanese War in 1895.<sup>20</sup>

However, the two sides agreed to set the sovereignty dispute aside in favor of improved relations. In 1972, China and Japan normalized relations and in 1978 concluded a Peace and Friendship Treaty. During negotiations over both agreements, the Japanese delegation raised the issue of sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands. On both occasions, the Chinese delegation proposed that they set aside the sovereignty issue.<sup>21</sup>

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, technological limitations meant that development of East China Sea resources was economically unviable. Only in the early 1990s was China able to begin extracting resources from these seabed reserves.<sup>22</sup> China became a net oil importer for the first time in 1993 and energy security took on greater significance in China's overall foreign policy. With the aim of reducing dependence on imports from the Middle East, China began to develop the East China Sea in earnest. Japan supported these initial efforts. From 1997 to 2001, Japan, through the Asian Development Bank and its own Export-Import Bank (now the Japanese Bank for International Cooperation, or JBIC), financed the construction of a pipeline running from the Chinese owned and operated Pinghu Field in the East China Sea to Shanghai.<sup>23</sup>

The connection between the Chinese claims to the Senkaku Islands and cooperation on energy extraction in the East China Sea dates to 1996, when both China and Japan ratified the UNCLOS. The convention allows for states to claim economic rights over nearby waters through two mechanisms.<sup>24</sup> First, states can claim an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) extending 200 nautical miles (nm) from their coastline.<sup>25</sup> These EEZs provide access to any seabed resources within those limits to the nation that claims sovereignty over them.<sup>26</sup> Second, states can claim an EEZ up to 350 nm from their coastline based on the extension of their continental shelf.<sup>27</sup> The convention provides no measures for resolving disputes when these two mechanisms come into conflict.<sup>28</sup> Under the convention, the Senkaku Islands grant a 200 nm EEZ extending from their coastlines.<sup>29</sup> As the East China Sea is only 360 nm at its widest point, UNCLOS added another dimension to the dispute by creating confusion where the Chinese and Japanese EEZs overlap.<sup>30</sup> Tokyo has proposed a maritime border along a line equidistant from the two countries. Many of the more promising oil and gas fields lie within mere miles of this line.<sup>31</sup> Japan's territorial claim includes the Senkakus and therefore could give Japan exclusive

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<sup>19</sup> *East China Sea*, 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Drifte, "Territorial Conflicts in the East China Sea," May 25, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> Drifte, "The Japan-China Confrontation," July 27, 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Drifte, "Territorial Conflicts in the East China Sea," May 25, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Drifte, *Japanese-Chinese Territorial Disputes*.

<sup>24</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Law of the Sea*, December 10, 1982.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Ramos-Mrsovosky, "International Law's Unhelpful Role," 903-913.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

access to the southeastern part of the sea.<sup>32</sup> China, however, claims the entirety of the East China Sea continental shelf, which Beijing argues extends the maximum 350 nm allowed under UNCLOS to the Okinawa Trough (and includes the Senkakus).<sup>33</sup>

Unilateral Chinese development of the Chunxiao Field sparked a bilateral crisis in 2004. The field is cut in half by the median line proposed by Japan, and Tokyo claims that Chinese extraction risks syphoning off gas that is rightfully Japan's. Combined with the general decline in political relations during Prime Minister Koizumi's tenure (2001-2006), the subsequent arrest by Japanese authorities of Chinese nationalists attempting to land on the Senkaku Islands saw bilateral relations reach a nadir.<sup>34</sup>

Fearful of rising political tensions with a major economic partner, Koizumi's successors worked closely with Beijing to improve relations. On May 7, 2008, Chinese President Hu Jintao and Japanese Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo released a Joint Statement in which they pledged to work toward a "mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests."<sup>35</sup> The two states resolved to work together to turn the disputed region into a "Sea of Peace, Cooperation and Friendship."<sup>36</sup> A Principled Consensus on the East China Sea Issue followed a month later.<sup>37</sup>

Observers greeted the Consensus as a breakthrough in bilateral relations.<sup>38</sup> However, further consultations in 2009 failed to build off the original Consensus as Chinese and Japanese officials disputed what rights the Consensus granted to each side. By 2010, the agreement had broken down and both sides turned to unilateral development. China has since built upwards of 15 structures in the East China Sea and is extracting oil and gas from the seabed. Although all are on the Chinese side of the median line, the Government of Japan demands that China stop drilling until the territory can be delimited and asks China to return to negotiations under the 2008 agreement.<sup>39</sup>

### Cooperation under Anarchy

Many scholars focus on the structure of international relations in East Asia to explain the lack of Sino-Japanese cooperation on mutually beneficial issues, including cooperation on energy extraction in the East China Sea.<sup>40</sup> This explanation draws on neorealism, which argues that the anarchical international system incentivizes states to choose self-help.<sup>41</sup> Under anarchy, there is no authority that exists above states to enforce agreements.<sup>42</sup> Compounding this situation is the proposition that the intentions of other states are inherently uncertain if not unknowable, a situation that creates mistrust and encourages states to cheat on international agreements.<sup>43</sup> Cooperation under these conditions, even when it would generate the preferred outcome for

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Smith, *Intimate Rivals*, 188-236.

<sup>35</sup> MOFA Japan, Joint Statement.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Centre for International Law, "Principled Consensus," June 18, 2008.

<sup>38</sup> Watts, "China and Japan agree," June 18, 2008 is representative. More seasoned observers were less sanguine. See: Drifte, "The future of the Japanese-Chinese relationship," 55.

<sup>39</sup> Szenchenyi, "China and Japan," August 10, 2015.

<sup>40</sup> Liff and Ikenberry, "Racing toward Tragedy?," 54; Bush, *The Perils of Proximity*, 23-40; Green, *Japan's Reluctant Realism*, 77-110; Samuels, *Securing Japan*, 135-184; Christensen, "China, the U.S.- Japanese Alliance," 49-80.

<sup>41</sup> Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," 167-169.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

both sides, is unlikely and even dangerous as the decision to cooperate can leave a state at a distinct disadvantage if its counterpart chooses self-help.<sup>44</sup>

According to the neorealist school, the mainspring of conflict is change in the relative power between states over time.<sup>45</sup> In East Asia, China's economic growth has led to a significant power shift and generated fear, uncertainty, and insecurity in the region.<sup>46</sup> China's ballooning defense budget has created fears that it seeks to up-end the status quo.<sup>47</sup> Japan has responded to Chinese defense spending with its own defensive measures.<sup>48</sup>

### *A Sino-Japanese Security Dilemma*

Numerous scholars have argued that this situation reflects the dynamics of a security dilemma.<sup>49</sup> Neorealism explains the security dilemma as follows. The international system is defined by a state of anarchy and uncertainty about the intentions of other states. For instance, it is simply impossible to know what a state's intentions will be in 20 years. States thus take precautionary defensive measures to prepare for the potential of aggression. These defensive measures may have actual or perceived offensive uses and therefore increase the perception of insecurity in other states, which respond by improving their own defensive capabilities. The result is a self-fulfilling spiral of perceived threats and defensive responses that serves only to increase regional tension and ultimately reduce security.<sup>50</sup>

Sino-Japanese tensions arose from the gradual change in the balance of relative power between the two. The growth of China relative to Japan is undeniable. China's gross domestic product in the year 2000 was US\$1.2 trillion, or a quarter of Japan's GDP of US\$4.9 trillion. In 2016, Chinese GDP stood at US\$11.2 trillion, compared to Japan's GDP of US\$4.94 trillion.<sup>51</sup> Over those years, China's defense budget increased dramatically. Between 2001 and 2016, it rose from an estimated US\$52 billion to US\$226 billion, a jump of 330 percent.<sup>52</sup> Other structural changes, namely the collapse of the Soviet Union, allowed China to pivot its security posture eastward and southeastward.<sup>53</sup>

Japan's defense spending has stayed flat even as China's has increased.<sup>54</sup> However, Beijing's expanded defense capabilities have not gone unnoticed in Tokyo. Japan first named China's military expansion a threat in its 2001 Defense White Paper and its security strategy has taken the China threat seriously since.<sup>55</sup> Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo outlined the threat:

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 38-58; Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," 5-49; Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of International Politics*, 29-54.

<sup>46</sup> Mearsheimer, "China's Unpeaceful Rise," 160-162; Allison, "Thucydides' Trap," August 22, 2012.

<sup>47</sup> Liff and Ikenberry, "Racing toward Tragedy?" 52-91; Chong and Hall, "The Lessons of 1914," 7-43.

<sup>48</sup> Bush, *The Perils of Proximity*, 26.

<sup>49</sup> Liff and Ikenberry, "Racing toward Tragedy?" 54; Bush, *The Perils of Proximity*, 23-40; Green, *Japan's Reluctant Realism*, 77-110; Samuels, *Securing Japan*, 135-184; Christensen, "China, the U.S.- Japanese Alliance," 49-80.

<sup>50</sup> Security dilemmas arise when "many of the means by which a state tries to increase its security decrease the security of others. Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," 169; see also: Bush, *The Perils of Proximity*, 24-25; Christensen, "China, the U.S.- Japanese Alliance," 49-50.

<sup>51</sup> The World Bank, "GDP (current US\$) Data," 2018.

<sup>52</sup> China Power Team, *What does China really spend?*, 2018.

<sup>53</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress*, April 26, 2016.

<sup>54</sup> Bush, *The Perils of Proximity*, 25-26.

<sup>55</sup> Japanese Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 2001*, 2001.

We have an immediate neighbor whose military expenditure is at least twice as large as Japan's and second only to the U.S. defense budget. The country has increased its military expenditures, hardly transparent, by more than 10 percent annually for more than 20 years since 1989.<sup>56</sup>

In lieu of increased defense spending, Tokyo pursues a combination of internal and external balancing. The government reapportioned defense spending to better respond to “the buildup of the Chinese military.”<sup>57</sup> For instance, increased Chinese naval and air activity around the Senkakus led Tokyo to bolster its own air defense and coast guard capabilities in the East China Sea.<sup>58</sup> The Abe government has also sought to balance China by developing security partnerships in Southeast Asia. Moreover, the Abe Cabinet relaxed restrictions on collective self-defense, worked with the US government to revise the Mutual Defense Guidelines to allow for greater interoperability between the two militaries, and restructured its own defense decision-making process and national security bureaucracy. Prime Minister Abe's structural and constitutional reforms dovetailed with the Obama Administration's 2012 efforts to improve bilateral defense relationships as part of its “pivot to Asia.”<sup>59</sup> Under Abe, the U.S.-Japan alliance has deepened and become capable of performing more complex missions.<sup>60</sup>

In line with the expectations of the security dilemma, Sino-Japanese relations have gradually deteriorated since the early 2000s. Since 2000, Chinese naval activities in the disputed areas of the East China Sea and in Japan's EEZ have triggered consternation in Tokyo. In turn, China has raised concerns about changes to Japan's peace constitution, which Beijing cites as a signal of reawakened Japanese militarism.<sup>61</sup>

Increasingly, Sino-Japanese tensions centered on the East China Sea. The September 2010 trawler incident led to the end of a period of reconciliation that began in 2006. In an apparent effort to relax tensions, Tokyo purchased the Senkakus in 2012. Beijing perceived the act as an attempt to unilaterally alter the status quo. Interactions between the navies of the two states have since become increasingly hostile. In 2012, a Chinese navy vessel targeted a Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force ship with its fire-control radar.<sup>62</sup> The following year, Beijing declared an Air Defense Identification Zone over the East China Sea.<sup>63</sup>

Since mid-2012, Chinese fishing vessels have entered the territorial sea and contiguous zone of the Senkaku Islands in large numbers. These fishing vessels are frequently accompanied by China's militarized Coast Guard. In August of 2016, as many as 300 fishing and 16 Chinese Coast Guard vessels entered the area around the Senkakus.<sup>64</sup> China increasingly deploys its coast guard to demonstrate sovereignty in the East China Sea.<sup>65</sup> Tokyo has responded by further bolstering its own defense and coast guard capabilities in the region.<sup>66</sup> The militarized interactions in the East China Sea have led some to compare the dispute over the Senkaku Islands

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<sup>56</sup> Smith, *Intimate Rivals*, 6.

<sup>57</sup> Bush, *The Perils of Proximity*, 26.

<sup>58</sup> China Power Team, *Law Enforcement Forces Destabilizing Asia?*, August 18, 2016; Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, *Playing Chicken in the East China Sea*, April 28 2017.

<sup>59</sup> Chanlett-Avery and Rinehart, *The U.S.-Japan Alliance*, 2.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 3; Green, “Japan is Back,” December 17, 2013.

<sup>61</sup> Yahuda, *Sino-Japanese Relations After the Cold War*, 41.

<sup>62</sup> Smith, *Intimate Rivals*, 191-196.

<sup>63</sup> Chase et. al., “Maritime Issues in the East and South China Seas,” 4-8.

<sup>64</sup> The tonnage of the Chinese Coast Guard grew by 70 percent between 2010-2016. China Power Team, *Law Enforcement Forces Destabilizing Asia?*, August 18, 2016.

<sup>65</sup> Morris, “Blunt Defenders of Sovereignty,” 76-112.

<sup>66</sup> China Power Team, *Law Enforcement Forces Destabilizing Asia?*, August 18, 2016; Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, *Playing Chicken in the East China Sea*, April 28, 2017.

to that in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Balkans, as a territory seemingly insignificant to the great powers, but one that could trigger a wider war.<sup>67</sup>

Some scholars contest the existence of a security dilemma in Sino-Japanese relations. The evidence of an East Asian arms race is surprisingly scant.<sup>68</sup> Defense spending increased at much lower rates in Japan, South Korea, and India than would be expected if a security dilemma were unfolding. The percentage increase in Japan's defense spending is in the single digits.<sup>69</sup> In fact, measured against GDP growth, defense budgets across Asia have declined.<sup>70</sup> Even China's much-discussed defense spending has consistently hovered at around two percent of GDP.<sup>71</sup> Perception is one of the key factors in a security dilemma. Interviews with Japanese defense officials led Bjorn Jerden and Linus Hagstrom to conclude that Japan's foreign policy establishment does not view China as a major threat. Instead, Japan's modest balancing is a response to North Korea's nuclear program.<sup>72</sup>

Moreover, East Asian states are not balancing China as expected.<sup>73</sup> From the early 1990s, realist scholars have argued that East Asia is "ripe for rivalry" with the expectation that states would seek to balance a rising China.<sup>74</sup> International relations specialists have since offered numerous explanations for the failure of this core expectation of structural realism, including the continued role of the U.S., the fact that China is surrounded by states like Japan and Vietnam that are capable of resisting its rise, the understudied domestic political costs of balancing, and the misapplication of Eurocentric theory.<sup>75</sup>

Overall, the neorealist structural explanation fails to account for the lack of cooperation on energy issues in the East China Sea because it cannot explain why China and Japan have chosen to cooperate in some areas – on energy efficiency, environmental issues, and fisheries – and not on others.<sup>76</sup> Neorealism's biggest weakness is its failure to take into account the domestic structure of the state itself; the regime type, bureaucracy, interest groups, and so on. Under neorealism, states are "irreducible atoms" or "billiard balls in a system of other billiard balls" that simply react to outward stimuli.<sup>77</sup> This analysis underestimates the role of domestic politics in determining behavior on the international scene. As Randall Schweller writes, "the decision to check unbalanced power by means of arms and allies – and to go to war if these deterrent measures fail – is very much a political act made by political actors."<sup>78</sup> States respond to external threats "in ways determined by both internal and external considerations of policy elites, who must reach consensus within an often decentralized and competitive political process."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Rudd, "A Maritime Balkans?" January 30, 2013.

<sup>68</sup> Hagstrom and Williamson, "Remilitarization?, Really?," 242-272.

<sup>69</sup> Fu et al., "Correspondence: Looking for Asia's Security Dilemma," 181-204; Rider, Findley, and Diehl, "Just Part of the Game?," 85-100.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Jerden and Hagstrom, "Rethinking Japan's China Policy," 215-250.

<sup>73</sup> Kang, "Getting Asia Wrong," 57-85.

<sup>74</sup> Friedberg, "Ripe for Rivalry," 5-33; Klare, "The Next Great Arms Race," 136-152; Betts, "Wealth, Power, and Instability," 34-77; Kristof, "The Rise of China," 59-74; Roy, "Hegemon on the Horizon?," 149-168.

<sup>75</sup> Cha, "Winning Asia," 98-133; Schweller, "Unanswered Threats," 159-201; Ross, "The Geography of Peace," 81-118.

<sup>76</sup> Yoshimatsu, *Mutual Interests and Policy Networks*, March 10, 2010; Manicom, *Bridging Troubled Waters*, 42-65.

<sup>77</sup> Snyder, *Myths of Empire*, 19-20.

<sup>78</sup> Schweller, "Unanswered Threats," 164.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

## Nationalism, Legitimacy, Territory

Nationalism is often cited as the reason for the intensity and intractability of the Sino-Japanese clash in the East China Sea.<sup>80</sup> Anti-Japanese sentiment is seen as deeply rooted and broadly-held in Chinese society, and Beijing is believed to be responsive to the demands of its nationalist constituents. Chinese nationalism centers largely on the maintenance of territorial integrity, a legacy of China's history of foreign occupation. Failure to protect Chinese territory, which includes the East China Sea and Senkaku Islands, would weaken the legitimacy of the CCP in the eyes of nationalists. Because the Communist Party cannot cooperate on energy extraction in the East China Sea without undermining its territorial claims, cooperation is off-limits to party leaders. Even if, as this argument posits, President Xi desired compromise and cooperation with Japan on the extraction of oil and gas, his nationalist constituency takes this pragmatic option off the table.<sup>81</sup>

A number of recent studies have found that party propaganda and policies encouraged and shaped modern Chinese nationalism.<sup>82</sup> The Patriotic Education Campaign is particularly well known. The CCP initiated the campaign in 1991 with the aim of boosting "national cohesion" at a time of social and economic upheaval. The Party recognized that the fall of communism in Europe and the dramatic economic changes initiated by economic liberalization had amplified political discontent, a fact impossible to ignore in the wake of the Tiananmen Square protests.<sup>83</sup> Reflecting on the root of the protests, Deng Xiaoping concluded that the CCP had made a mistake by forsaking nationalistic education in the 1980s. He proposed a nationwide educational focus on the history of national humiliation and the efforts made by the Party to save China.<sup>84</sup> In a letter published in the *People's Daily* in early 1991, the new party secretary Jiang Zemin outlined a rationale for the campaign:

In the past, China had been bullied because it had weak leaders. The worst bullies were Westerners and the Japanese. If not for the Chinese Communist Party, China would be weak and divided. And America sought to contain China and to prevent its rise.<sup>85</sup>

Nationalism, a recent analysis explains, is "a double-edged sword."<sup>86</sup> On one hand, it can provide legitimacy to authoritarian regimes during times of economic or social upheaval. States are often complicit in this process, wielding nationalism instrumentally to shore-up support. On the other hand, governments that lean on nationalist support must live up to the expectations of nationalists or face dissension. In pre-WWI Germany, nationalists "sought a muscular foreign policy, were harshly critical of compromise, and were quick to advocate for the use of force."<sup>87</sup> Perceived weakness or capitulation brought strong rebuke from constituencies concerned with national prestige. In other words, "Nationalist constituents served to limit the set of possible

<sup>80</sup> Representative examples are Smith, "Japan and the East China Sea Dispute," 371, and Drifte, *Japanese-Chinese Territorial Disputes*, August 2008. Even neorealist analyses note the intensifying effect nationalist constituencies have on the dynamics of the security dilemma. See: Bush, *Perils of Proximity*, 23-24; Christensen, "China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance," 54.

<sup>81</sup> Gries, "China's New Thinking on Japan," 831-850; Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 4-5; Weiss, *Powerful Patriots*, 15-41.

<sup>82</sup> He, *The Search for Reconciliation*, 234-288; Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 4-5; Weiss, *Powerful Patriots*, 1-14; Reilly, *Strong State, Smart State*, 3.

<sup>83</sup> Pomfret, *The Beautiful Country and the Middle Kingdom*, 535-536; Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 99-100.

<sup>84</sup> Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 96.

<sup>85</sup> Pomfret, *The Beautiful Country and the Middle Kingdom*, 535.

<sup>86</sup> Chong and Hall, "The Lessons of 1914," 27.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

solutions available to leaders on the international stage, thus restricting their ability to pursue the more flexible policies and compromises that could have helped to avert conflict.”<sup>88</sup>

A similar dynamic is present in China today. Nationalism confers legitimacy on the party as the defender of Chinese prestige and sovereignty.<sup>89</sup> However, this creates an expectation that the Party will not back down in territorial disputes. Backing down would lead to public rebukes and questioning of the party’s legitimacy.<sup>90</sup> Although China is a one-party authoritarian regime, it must respond to public opinion. Chinese citizens increasingly use public protest and the internet to express their reactions to specific issues.<sup>91</sup> Party officials earnestly read newspapers, “web sites, discussion forums, online bulletin boards, and Weblogs” to discern public opinion on foreign policy issues.<sup>92</sup>

The interaction between domestic audiences and politicians can best be understood with Robert Putnam’s conception of the two-level game.<sup>93</sup> Putnam writes:

At the national level, domestic groups pursue their interests by pressuring the government to adopt favorable policies, and politicians seek power by constructing coalitions among those groups. At the international level, national governments seek to maximize their own ability to satisfy domestic pressures, while minimizing the adverse consequences of foreign developments.<sup>94</sup>

The Chinese government, reliant on domestic support, gains legitimacy and power from the creation of nationalist interest groups. However, these interest groups expect certain behavior in exchange for their support, so the state finds itself limited on the international stage to policies domestic audiences deem acceptable.

The connection between the Chinese claims to the Senkaku Islands, domestic nationalism, and cooperation on energy extraction in the East China Sea dates to the ratification of the UNCLOS in 1996. According to some legal scholars, the ambiguity of international law complicates the East China Sea matter by creating territorial disputes but offering no mechanism outside of bilateral consultation for their resolution. In fact, these scholars argue, the UNCLOS and international customary law governing the acquisition of territory serves only to heighten tensions by “encourage[ing] the ‘display of sovereignty’ and penalize[ing] states for appearing to ‘acquiesce’ in a rival state’s claim to disputed territory.”<sup>95</sup>

The problems associated with the UNCLOS and international customary law are clearly visible in the development of oil and gas fields in the East China Sea. As discussed above, Chinese development of the Chunxiao Field in 2003 sparked a dispute with Japan. Chunxiao, Tokyo claimed, straddled its proposed median line and Chinese drilling violated Japan’s sovereignty. After a Japanese vessel sent to collect geological data from the Japanese side of the median confirmed that the Chunxiao Field extended across the median line, the Japanese government licensed a private Japanese company to begin drilling in July 2005. China responded with the declaration that it would consider any drilling a violation of its sovereignty.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>89</sup> Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation*, 131.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>91</sup> Weiss, *Powerful Patriots*, 160.

<sup>92</sup> Shirk, “Changing Media, Changing Foreign Policy in China,” 239.

<sup>93</sup> Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics,” 427-460.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 434.

<sup>95</sup> Ramos-Mrsovosky, “International Law’s Unhelpful Role,” 2008.

<sup>96</sup> Drifte, *Japanese-Chinese Territorial Disputes*, August 2008.

Tokyo's support for Chinese development of the Pinghu Field is an exception that tests the rule. The Pinghu Field sits roughly 30 miles west of the proposed median line. Japan did not raise complaints about China's development of the field and in fact, from 1997 to 2001, funded the construction of two pipelines from the field to the Chinese mainland. Beijing sees Japanese tolerance of and financial support for its development of Pinghu as an "at least implicit acquiescence" to Chinese rights to the field and to the maritime zone west of the median line more broadly.<sup>97</sup>

### *The Limits of Nationalism*

The nationalist narrative alone cannot explain the failure of cooperation on energy. First, recent research shows that the prevalence of aggressive nationalism in China may be overstated. The party's legitimacy is based equally on economic performance. This fact would seem to weigh in favor of cooperation on energy issues and the overall reduction of tensions in the economically vital East China Sea.<sup>98</sup> Johnston, for example, sees little evidence of rising nationalism. He notes that scholars have undertaken few systematic studies of Chinese nationalism and those that have show a more nuanced and less alarming picture than is popularly supposed. The focus on the role of the internet is likewise misplaced, as television, which is more regulated than the internet, is still the primary source of news for the majority of Chinese.<sup>99</sup>

Johnston also argues that the costs of ignoring public opinion are lower than most believe. What does Xi have to fear when "he faces no popular elections, when he commands a vast internal security apparatus as well as the military, and when he has powerful propaganda tools to guide opinion or, if necessary, suppress it?"<sup>100</sup> Likewise, while Weiss and Reilly both believe that the party must be responsive to public opinion, they acknowledge that the relationship is weighted heavily in favor of the state. The state exercises impressive control over nationalists, not the other way around.<sup>101</sup>

Finally, Fravel's study of China's past settlement of territorial disputes casts doubt on the role of nationalism in restricting compromise. If nationalists rule out territorial compromise, why has China peacefully settled the vast majority of its territorial disputes, often to its disadvantage?<sup>102</sup> The question remains: Why haven't China and Japan cooperated on energy extraction in the East China Sea?

### China's Maritime Strategy

Beijing is pursuing a coherent maritime strategy in East Asia that rules out cooperation with Japan in the East China Sea. This strategy envisions a gradual process by which the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) will develop blue water capabilities (the ability to operate beyond coastal waters) and expand Chinese sea power into the Pacific Ocean.<sup>103</sup> The East China Sea is a crucial stepping stone into the Pacific and, because it contains crucial sea lines of communication, is critical to China's military, energy, and economic security. However, this foreign policy is not derived solely from the demands of the international system, as neorealists

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Downs and Saunders, "Legitimacy and the Limits of Nationalism," 144-146.

<sup>99</sup> Johnston, "Is Chinese Nationalism Rising?" 40.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Weiss, *Powerful Patriots*, 15-17; Reilly, *Strong State, Smart State*, 3.

<sup>102</sup> Fravel, "Regime Insecurity and International Cooperation," 47.

<sup>103</sup> Scobell, McMahon, and Cooper III, "China's Aircraft Carrier Program," 66.

would argue, but reflects an interaction between these international pressures and the strategic beliefs of the party.

Neoclassical realism provides a framework for understanding the role of interest groups and strategic beliefs in determining a state's foreign policy. It combines realism's general attention to material capabilities and a state's international position, neorealism's interest in systemic pressures, and classical realism's consideration of the role of domestic decision making in foreign policy behavior.<sup>104</sup> Under neoclassical realism, the influence of the international system is "indirect and complex" and must be translated by domestic actors before a state comes to a decision. As such, structure creates a menu of options rather than determining specific policy decisions.<sup>105</sup> Ultimately it is statesmen that respond to the distribution of power, and so it is their perceptions, beliefs, and authority that determine the nature of a state's foreign policy.

Realism in general offers some clarity on the issue of resources and international politics. Realism holds that dependence on other states for resources creates vulnerability. To moderate this exposure, states will attempt to seize resources and markets.<sup>106</sup> The incentives to do so are especially significant in high-growth economies, where internal economic pressures force outward expansion.<sup>107</sup> Resource-poor states, like those along Northeast Asian littoral, are particularly concerned with relative gains and prone to conflict over resources.<sup>108</sup> Since the mid-1990s, East Asia's dramatic economic growth coupled with uniquely high dependence on hydrocarbon imports, fears of global peak oil supply, and the scarcity of regional reserves have led observers to predict conflict over the region's untapped oil and gas reserves.<sup>109</sup>

### *China's Blue Water Vision*

Shifts in the international distribution of power have led China to turn seaward. The collapse of the Soviet Union removed the necessity of China's continental focus. Given its status as a net oil importer and its reliance on global supply chains, China depends on secure sea lines of communication for economic and energy security. Currently, China relies on the U.S. Navy to defend most of its maritime interests, an uncomfortable fact for Chinese strategists. In war, PLAN analysts believe that the United States could seek to blockade the Malacca Strait and cut the Chinese economy off from its oil and gas lifeblood.<sup>110</sup> Chinese analysts have long viewed the U.S. alliance system and its presence along the First Island Chain, which includes Japan, Okinawa, and the Senkaku Islands, as an attempt at containment. Moreover, the United States has proposed a military rebalance to the Pacific and upgraded the U.S.-Japan alliance as part of its "Pivot to Asia," increasing Chinese insecurity vis-à-vis the United States.<sup>111</sup>

In response to these structural inputs, Beijing has pursued a strategy of self-help based on PLAN's strategic beliefs on the importance of sea power, sea control, and a "blue water" navy. China's maritime strategists draw inspiration from Alfred Thayer Mahan, an influential 19<sup>th</sup> century American naval officer and great power theorist.<sup>112</sup> Mahan argued that in order to protect

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<sup>104</sup> Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," 144-177.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 146-147.

<sup>106</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 129-160. More recent work attempts to bridge the gap between liberal and realist interpretations of interdependence. Dale Copeland argues that interdependence creates incentives for conflict when a state expects that changes in the pattern of trade will leave it vulnerable. The desire to get out in front of these trends leads to conflict. See: Copeland, *Economic Interdependence and War*; Snyder, "Trade Expectations and Great Power Conflict."

<sup>107</sup> Choucri and North, *Nations in Conflict*, 15-17.

<sup>108</sup> For a summary of these arguments, see: Rongxing, *Territorial Disputes and Seabed Petroleum Exploitation*, 4-5.

<sup>109</sup> See: Calder, "Asia's Empty Tank," 55-69; Collins et al., *China's Energy Strategy*, 2008.

<sup>110</sup> Collins, Erickson, and Goldstein, "Chinese Naval Analysts Consider Question," 299-335; Collins and Erickson, "Chinese Efforts to Create Fleet," 89; Downs, "The Chinese Energy Security Debate," 21-41.

<sup>111</sup> Nathan and Scobell, "How China Sees America," 32-47.

<sup>112</sup> Holmes and Yoshihara, "A Chinese Turn to Mahan," June 24, 2009.

sea lines of communication and further maritime commercial interests, a great power must both maintain a large blue water navy based on a fleet of capital ships and control key geographic positions.<sup>113</sup> Chinese military academies have incorporated his work into their curriculum for rising officers and his views are prevalent among influential military writers and in government think tanks.<sup>114</sup> In addition, numerous Chinese naval officers and government-funded research projects have approvingly cited the influence of Mahan's theories on America's rise to superpower status and argued that it presents a model for China.<sup>115</sup> The father of the modern Chinese navy, Liu Huaqing, cites Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History* as a major influence on his own thinking.<sup>116</sup>

A Mahanian maritime strategy is not the only option available to Chinese decision-makers in light of the structural pressures that they confront. In fact, such a strategy raises the risk of direct conflict with both regional powers and the United States. Many observers note that it would be both cheaper and less antagonistic to rely on the Mao-era policy of "near-coast defense."<sup>117</sup> This policy, based on the development of a conventional submarine fleet and area denial capabilities rather than blue water naval concepts, presents a less direct challenge to the United States' interests.<sup>118</sup>

The decision to pursue a blue water navy, evidenced by China's developing surface fleet and by the PLAN's increased bureaucratic influence, represents a victory of maritime interests over those who favor a continental (or simply less expensive) approach to security.<sup>119</sup> In 2015, China released its first Defense White Paper, which declared the "traditional mentality that land outweighs sea must be abandoned, and great importance has to be attached to managing the seas and oceans and protecting maritime rights and interests."<sup>120</sup> And, since 2004, the navy has had a seat on the Central Military Commission, the Chinese equivalent of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff and traditionally the domain of the continental-focused People's Liberation Army.<sup>121</sup>

### *The PLAN and Resource Nationalism*

China's energy policy in the East China Sea is derived from Mahanian strategic beliefs that emphasize the control of key geographic features, particularly narrow choke points through which sea lines of communication pass. The East China Sea, bounded by the Senkaku Island chain to the east, Japan proper and the Korean peninsula to the north, and Taiwan to the south, is crisscrossed by shipping routes and offers the shortest route to the Pacific Ocean from Chinese ports. Any ships entering or leaving the sea must pass through the Taiwan or Tsushima straits or the passages between the Japanese island chain that extends from Kyushu to Taiwan. Beijing, which has come to view this region as vital to its defense and its long-term strategic goal of becoming a maritime power, pursues a policy to gradually assert its dominance over the entire sea and lays claim to the geopolitically crucial Senkaku Islands.<sup>122</sup> As noted earlier, cooperation with other nations, particularly Japan, on energy extraction from the seabed could undermine this strategic goal. For this reason, Beijing pursues a policy of resource nationalism in the East

<sup>113</sup> Lord, "China and Maritime Transformations," 449; Holmes and Yoshihara, "Influence of Mahan," 25-51.

<sup>114</sup> McVadon, "China's Navy Today," 391.

<sup>115</sup> Erickson and Goldstein, "China Studies the Rise of Great Powers," 409.

<sup>116</sup> Li, "The Evolution of China's Naval Strategy," 144-169.

<sup>117</sup> Holmes and Yoshihara, "Influence of Mahan," 25-51; White, *The China Choice*, 2012.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Scobell et al., "China's Aircraft Carrier Program," 65-79.

<sup>120</sup> "Document: China's Military Strategy," May 26, 2015; See also: Liou, Musgrave, and Daniel III, "The Imitation Game," 157-174.

<sup>121</sup> Scobell, McMahon, and Cooper III, "China's Aircraft Carrier Program," 67.

<sup>122</sup> Holmes and Yoshihara, "Influence of Mahan," 23-51.

China Sea which emphasizes relative gains and the pursuit of national interest over cooperation and profit.

Generally, observers point to both market and strategic influences in China's overall energy strategy.<sup>123</sup> Pessimistic analysts tend to note that China's national oil companies receive immense state-funding, have tight relationships with CCP leadership, and generally act out of concern for the national interest rather than for profit. In particular, these companies appear to pursue policies of resource nationalism by aiming to "lock up" oil and gas supplies through direct investments and energy-backed loans to oil-producing countries.<sup>124</sup> This behavior is said to weaken the global oil market and ultimately negatively impact market-based energy security strategies, such as that pursued by the U.S. More optimistic observers note that China's general approach to energy is profit-driven and is therefore no different than the approaches of other resource-import dependent countries like the U.S. and Japan.

China's energy policy does not fit into either category of this dichotomous approach. As Øystein Tunsjø writes:

China does not completely trust that the international petroleum market, interstate cooperation, or other 'longs' will safeguard China's energy interests. Hence, China has taken a number of steps to develop 'short' strategies that seek to insure against supply disruptions, high prices, and instability in the international petroleum market.<sup>125</sup>

Beijing's energy security strategy mixes both strategic and market approaches. The ultimate goal is to hedge against the risk associated with a heavy reliance on oil and gas imports.

## Conclusion

What explains China's decision to pursue self-help in the East China Sea despite economic interdependence with Japan, a mutual interest in improving energy security, a prior agreement to cooperate, and cooperation on other energy issues, such as nuclear safety and environmental protection? To answer this question, I looked at three possible explanations. First, I examined the neorealist tenet that cooperation under anarchy is unlikely and dangerous. I looked at the common neorealist argument that a security dilemma has arisen between China and Japan, reducing incentives for cooperation. However, the evidence for a security dilemma is unconvincing. Though a powerful explanation for general tension between the two Asian powers, the structural argument fails to explain why China and Japan choose to cooperate on some issues, but not on others.

Second, many observers point to the role of nationalism in complicating cooperation. According to this argument, Chinese nationalists restrict the set of options available to the Chinese leaders in diplomacy with Japan. This would appear to be particularly true in the East China Sea, where China's history with Japan, the dispute over the Senkaku Islands, and a history of confrontation undermines domestic support for compromise. However, this explanation overestimates the leverage nationalists hold within the authoritarian Chinese state; the party could make the necessary compromises if it so desired. It further fails to explain why China has

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<sup>123</sup> For representative examples, see: Lee, "China's Geostrategic Search for Oil," 2012; Economy and Levi, *By All Means Necessary*, 2014; Blumenthal, "Concerns with Respect to China's Energy Policy," 418-436.

<sup>124</sup> Manning, "The Asian Energy Predicament," 73-88; Bush, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, March 16, 2006; U.S. House of Representatives, "Proceedings and Debates of the 109th Congress, First Session," June 30, 2006; U.S. Senate, *Energy Trends in China and India*, 2006.

<sup>125</sup> Tunsjø, *Security and Profit in China's Energy Policy*, 28.

been willing to settle most of its territorial disputes but not those that involve both contested maritime areas and seabed energy resources.

I argue that the best explanation for China's pursuit of self-help can be found in the strategic beliefs of China's leadership. The PLAN maritime strategy, which is seen as a necessity given China's uncertain security environment, dictates the development of a blue water navy, demands the control of key geographic zones, and holds that sea power is crucial to the maintenance of commerce on which China depends. The East China Sea, which contains important sea lines of communication and is a potential pathway into the Pacific Ocean, is thus considered vital to Chinese national security. Beijing is unwilling to make the compromises necessary to facilitate cooperation with Japan because doing so could undermine China's military, economic, and energy security.

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