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INCIDENTS IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA:
EXPLORING THE CHINESE PERSPECTIVE OF THE DISPUTES

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Abstract

Incidents in the South China Sea have increased in frequency over the past decade, leading to an increased need for an informed policy response. Despite the prevalence of the South China Sea disputes in policymaking and scholarly discourse, empirical work to understand the driving forces behind China's actions in the region has not been undertaken with a Chinese perspective, leaving policymakers without crucial information and an incomplete understanding of Chinese actions in the region. International Maritime Law is understood to be the framework for peace in the region, but this paper suggests that the Law of the Sea has ceased to be effective because China has ceased to abide by it. Furthermore, alternative avenues to peace and stability must include the Chinese perspective and a better understanding of the reasons for increased Chinese action and incidents in the region.

This paper seeks to analyze the driving forces behind China's actions in two models. First, through an original coding of two Chinese-language newspapers from 1970-2015 to test for the presence of nationalistic terms. A second model employs a wide range of hegemony indicators to test for China's level of regional hegemony and its relationship to incidents from 1970-2015. My findings point to an over-use of nationalism to describe Chinese actions and a clear conclusion that China's regional hegemony is driving its increased action in the South China Sea.

摘要

本研究的试图回答以下问题：为什么中国近年来在南海变得更加活跃？随着中国在南海的活动继续增加，以及对领土争端的最终解决办法仍然难以捉摸，这个学术问题在今天的政治气候越来越重要。本研究的目标为利用我建立的北京报纸数据库来检视中国在南海问题上的外交政策。研究结果表明，尽管在军事化事件增加的同时，关于南海的报道文章也随之增加，然而民族主义心态却没有。此一发现与外交政策人士及学者的论点不同，因而对中国民族主义的研究有所贡献。

本研究更进一步利用霸权理论，指出中国崛起的区域霸权是南海事件的指标。通过对海军吨位和经济指标的观察，我发现中国区域霸权的增加与中国在南海行动的增加两者之间具有相关性，前者也能有效解释后者。区域权力的过渡促使中国在南海展开一系列的行动。本研究结果更表明，中国的军事和经济力量与区域优势没有像中国在国际体系中的影响力那样增长而导致了南海等冲突的爆发。

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Chapter 1

An Introduction to the South China Sea Disputes and the Chinese Perspective

Introduction

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) went into force in 1994 and has been signed by 164 states – making it the defining piece of international legislation governing maritime conduct and disputes. UNCLOS not only sets forth regulations for the protection of marine environments and the safe passage of trade through vital regions, it also aims to be a tool to rectify territorial disputes that may arise between states. Theoretically, UNCLOS provides straightforward restrictions for exclusive economic zones and territorial waters, as well as the status of bordering continental shelves. While UNCLOS provides clear answers to questions of control over maritime territories, its lack of sufficient enforcement mechanisms has resulted in a failure to reach a lasting solution to the region’s territorial disputes.

The South China Sea disputes threaten to destabilize the Southeast Asian region and cause military conflict as China asserts its regional hegemony, making the Chinese position in the disputes of paramount importance to understand. Scholars and foreign policy experts have produced a great deal of work that purports to use the framework of UNCLOS to bring stability to the South China Sea. Works by Bateman and Emmers (2012), Hayton (2014), Percival (2007), Catley (1997) and Kaplan (2014) all reference UNCLOS as the “solution” to the South China Sea disputes, but China’s rejection of that framework displays the emptiness of such an international agreement: the treaty became obsolete when one of its largest parties ceased to abide by it.

UNCLOS has been effective in solidifying maritime boundaries that had been recognized in a similar form prior to the ratification of the treaty, but provisions that had not existed prior to UNCLOS are often problematic. One departure from the UNCLOS framework is China's clear intention to stray from treaty provisions that require the free movement of goods through international waters. In February 2017, China went as far as to announce it will be revising its maritime traffic safety law to restrict foreign vessels in Chinese territorial waters (Asian LLI, 2017). The significance of this lies in a widening definition of "Chinese territorial waters." By claiming and controlling waters that it purports to own but that UNCLOS delineates as international water, China has brought the South China Sea disputes to a point beyond rectification by means of UNCLOS. The dynamic interests of the actors in the disputes, in addition to the vitality of the region's trade, fisheries, and strategic use ensure that the South China Sea disputes remain in a constant state of flux – outside of the control of UNCLOS.

An analysis of the current legal maritime structure shows that it may not be equipped to settle the South China Sea disputes because it lacks a method to ensure that signatory states abide by its provisions. Rather, a new structure is developing in Southeast Asia that is contingent upon and defined by a host of realities in the region. These realities are being defined by the interests of the most powerful actor, China, which has put forward a series of historical claims to the entirety of the South China Sea. This new status quo includes the Chinese perspective on the South China Sea as well as the natural resources, trade flows, and other interests that provide the parameters for a solution to the maritime territorial disputes. It is with the understanding of these parameters that it becomes crucial to explore the driving forces behind China's increased activity in the region - a developing discourse to which this paper aims to contribute.

Existing Legal Structure

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), whose most recent charter came into force in November of 1994, constitutes the current basis of international law in the South China Sea disputes (UNCLOS, 2016). Long before the inception of recognized international maritime law, and throughout much of pre-modern history the South China Sea played a pivotal role as an “intersection of history” as the primary route for the vital trade connection between China and India, Europe, and the Middle East (Swanson, 1982). Many of the claims to the South China Sea are derived from this pre-modern era on the basis that traders and admirals settled on or stopped at the Spratly and Paracel islands while traversing the South China Sea on trading trips.

While historical claims and their relevance will be discussed in a later section, it is necessary to first outline the existing legal maritime structure that applies to the South China Sea and how scholars have applied it to the current disputes. All claimants in the South China Sea disputes, including China, are signatories to UNCLOS, which sets forth clear laws for the waters surrounding the territories of nation-states (Poling, 2013). All regulations are established from the baseline of sovereign and inhabited islands, making the law’s application to the South China Sea particularly challenging.

Table 1: UNCLOS Provisions and Regulation Areas (UNCLOS, 2013)

Regulation Area	Description
Territorial Waters	12 Nautical Miles from low-water line – can use all resources and set all regulations
Contiguous Waters	12 Nautical Miles beyond Territorial Water Boundary – can enforce only taxation, immigration, customs, and pollution regulations
Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)	200 nautical miles from low-water line – has exploitative rights to all natural resources. Can regulate but must maintain freedom of maritime navigation and overflight

Legal maritime rights in terms of UNCLOS are derived from the status of land features, which are the focal point of claims made to islands in the South China Sea by Taiwan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, and other ASEAN claimants. In contrast, the Chinese government's claim - which is often referred to as the nine-dashed line claim because of the number of lines on the original map that were used to mark the boundaries of China's maritime claims to the region - is not based on a claim to land features and therefore does not fall within the legal maritime framework of UNCLOS (Beckman, 2011). Rather, China's nine-dashed line claim (see figure 1) is derived from a 1947 map drawn by Yang Huairan, a geographer for the Nationalist Government that fell in 1949 (see figure 2) (Beech, 2013). Yang's work consisted of 11 dashes that were located in slightly different locations. One notable exclusion from the renewed 2009

claim is the Gulf of Tonkin, which Mao Zedong ceded to Vietnam in 1952 (CSIS, 2012).

In comparing the two maps, scholars (see Fravel, Gao, and Dutton) - in addition to the U.S. State Department (2014) - have noted that the 2009 dashes come far closer to the shores of nations in the region than did the 1947 map. Figure 1 depicts the nine-dashed line in relation to China's 200 nm EEZ (as defined by UNCLOS) with the artificial islands that were constructed by China inside the EEZs of the Philippines and Malaysia. In this map, the aggressiveness of the Chinese claim and the seriousness of the conflict becomes obvious. To make matters worse, the current legal structure for governing maritime disputes is not equipped to resolve such varying definitions and claims to the sovereignty of what are, in most cases, uninhabitable atolls and reefs.

Figure 1: China's South China Sea Claims (2009)

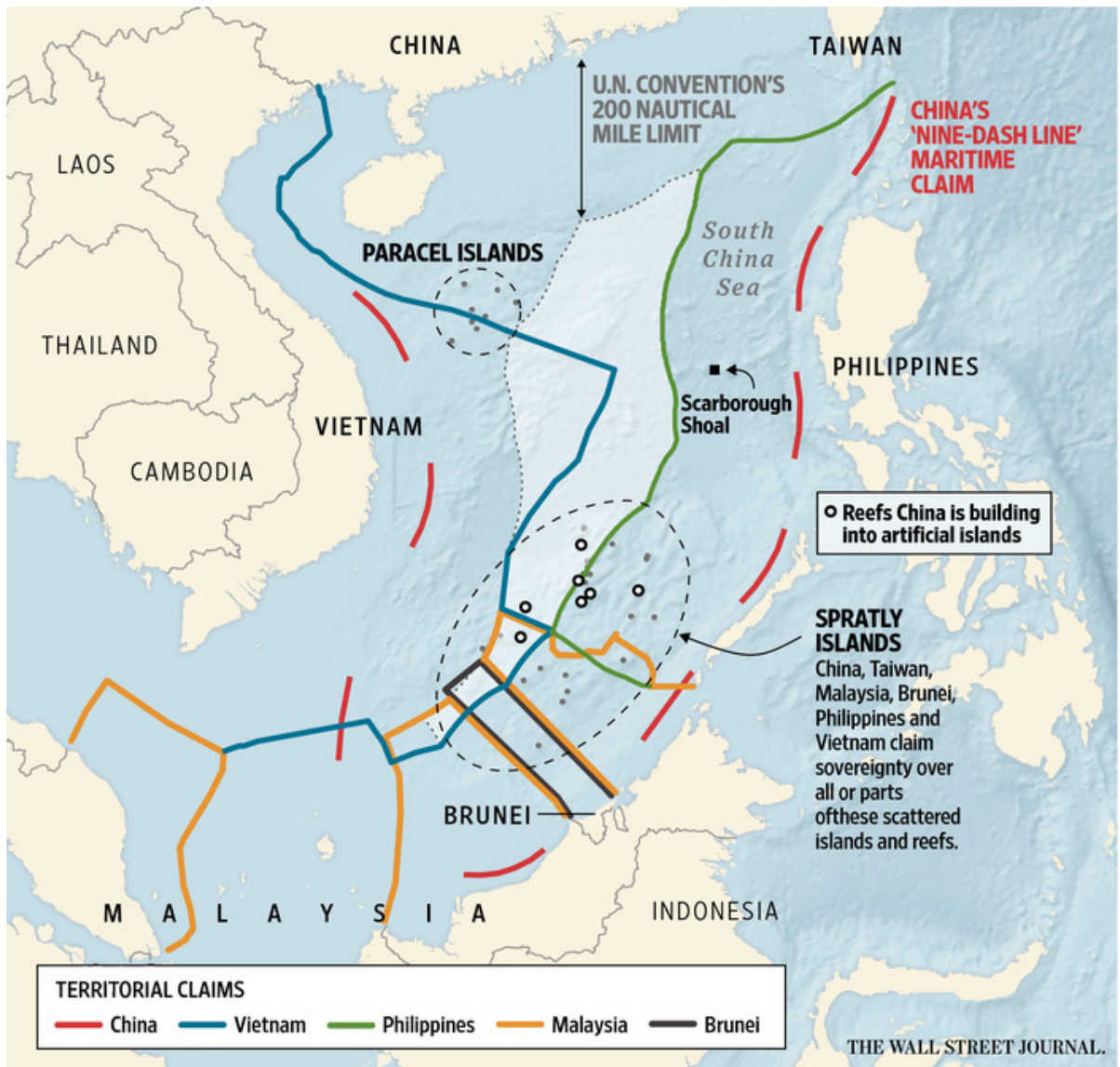
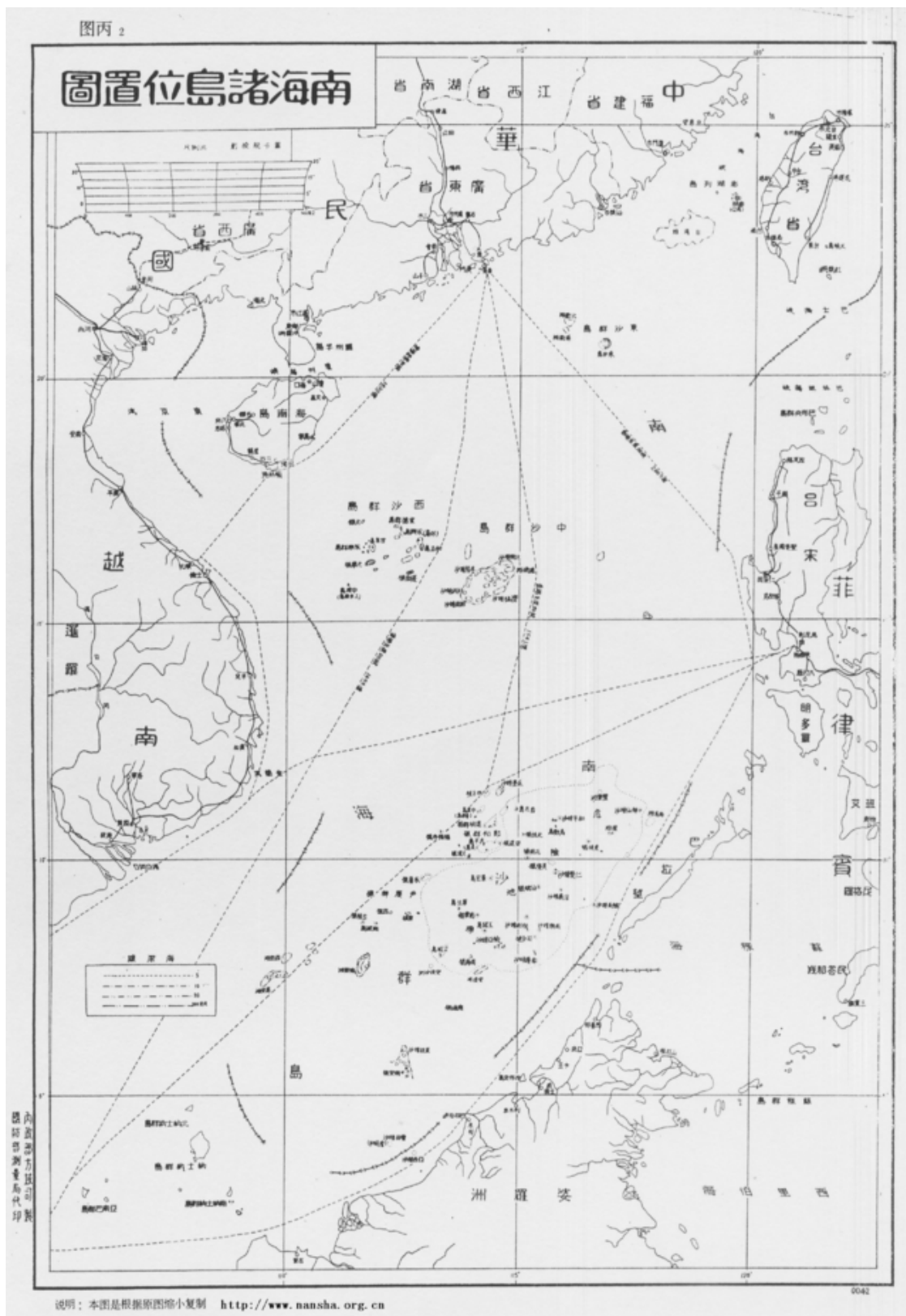


Figure 2: China's South China Sea Claim: 1949



UNCLOS Dispute Resolution

Disputes related to UNCLOS are heard by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, Netherlands, which has jurisdiction over disputes of sovereignty and the interpretation of UNCLOS (UNCLOS, 2017). Similar cases have been brought before the court, such as one brought by Slovenia against Croatia. The result of the case, in June 2017, was to allow Slovenia to traverse Croatian territorial waters in order to access international waters, but Croatia has said it will ignore the ruling (BBC, 2017). A case filed by the Philippines in 2013 against Chinese actions and claims in the South China Sea further displayed the current legal regime's inability to provide an enforceable solution to disputes in the South China Sea. Following the submission of the case by the Philippines, China issued a Note Verbale asserting that it "does not recognize the arbitration initiated by the Philippines" and further refused to participate in any proceedings (Court of Arbitration, 2013). The U.S. Department of State issued a report during the deliberations in which it explored the various legal assertions behind China's claims to the South China Sea, and reminded China that Article 121(3) of UNCLOS states: "islands that constitute rocks which cannot sustain human habitation or economic life of their own would not be entitled to an EEZ and a continental shelf," and that neither would artificially constructed islands be entitled to such considerations under UNCLOS (U.S. Department of State, 2014).

The resulting award from the Court of Arbitration was unusually decisive, partly because the Chinese government had refused to participate in the proceedings. In deciding against the Chinese claims, the court attacked the basis of Chinese claims to the region by dismissing "historical claims" as irrelevant to the implementation of international law, including the Law of the Sea, saying "[t]he Tribunal concluded that there was no legal basis for China to claim historic rights to resources within the sea areas falling within the nine-dash line" (Court of Arbitration,

2016). The report went further, criticizing Chinese construction of artificial islands, charging that “China had caused severe harm to the coral reef environment and violated its obligation to preserve and protect fragile ecosystems and the habitat of depleted, threatened, or endangered species (Court of Arbitration, 2016).” With no powers of enforcement, the award by the International Court of Arbitration represented only an ideological victory for the Philippines and other ASEAN claimants. It also left those that examine the South China Sea disputes with a series of points for future study.

First, it is clear that historical claims must be considered when examining the South China Sea disputes. Because UNCLOS is a self-enforcing international agreement, and China has made clear its intention to *not* self-enforce all provisions, the basis of Chinese claims requires further examination. Second, the international maritime regime can no longer be simply defined by the rules of UNCLOS; instead, it must now include a complex network of bilateral and multilateral agreements that cover topics such as resource extraction, freedom of navigation, and trade. Finally, without methods of enforcement for international maritime regimes and the willingness of other actors to intervene, the viewpoints and understandings of individual states - particularly larger and more powerful states such as China - will continue to define the disputes and status quo in the South China Sea, regardless of non-enforceable international agreements such as UNCLOS.

The Chinese Perspective: Historical Claims and Island-Building

Historical Claims

While the International Court of Arbitration has made it clear that (in legal terms) historical claims are wholly irrelevant to territorial and maritime disputes in the case of the South China Sea, the People's Republic of China continues to assert the relevance of its historical claims. Despite the clear legal discourse on the subject of historical claims, the narrative of China – the largest actor in the region – must be considered and understood when analyzing the disputes. So long as actors are operating within different frameworks – with China continuing to call attention to historical claims and the international community continuing to focus on unenforceable international law, meaningful discussion and eventual resolution of the South China Sea disputes will be out of reach.

The South China Sea's delineation as "international water" dates back to the late Ming period (1403 – 1644) and the introduction of European trade companies in East Asia. With an increased European presence in Asia, European ideals of free passage and trade policies clashed with the tributary system of the Chinese Empire. The understanding of the South China Sea as "international water" is derived from the European understanding of the freedom of navigation rather than from the Chinese understanding of the South Sea (南海). For China, the South Sea was a part of the Chinese Empire and a critical economic thruway for trade and exploration.

China's legal claim rests in an assertion of first discovery in the second century CE (Tang, 1991). China also asserts that the South China Sea was mapped by Chinese scholars in the third century CE and that archeological evidence from several islands match Han Dynasty era artifacts (placing them in the early second century CE) (Kompas, 1991). If true, these assertions would be

the earliest historical basis of any claimants, as the claims of the Philippines, Vietnam, and Malaysia are derived from later events, including European colonization. Incorporated into China's claim is the assertion that many of those subsequent events, including the French colonization of the habitable South China Sea in the Spratly and Paracel Islands, were illegitimate and do not negate China's historical claims (Catley, 1997).

It is easily verifiable that China had continuous trade contact with what was called the South Sea Region (南洋), which referred to the nations in South and Southeast Asia from a China-centric perspective. The known trade routes with this region were predominant during the Kingdom of Wu (222 CE - 279 CE) and continued to expand during the subsequent Liang Dynasty (502-587 CE), with Funan (present-day part of Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam) acting as a major entrepot for South Sea Region trade in the Mekong River Basin by the sixth century CE (Leonard, 1984). By the thirteenth century, continued trade with the South Sea Region relied on the shipping capacities of Malay city-states in the absence of Chinese naval power (Rockhill, 1911).

The existing debate over Chinese historical claims is whether they are relevant to the present-day territorial and international waters in the South China Sea. The International Court of Arbitration and ASEAN have said no, but the Chinese government continues to argue that they are indeed relevant and constitute a valid present-day claim. It is not the validity of China's presence in the South China Sea that is in question. Rather, it is whether a trading presence (in which shipping lanes circumvented the open ocean and dangerous rocks of the South China Sea islands) can be considered a legitimate present-day claim of sovereignty to the various islands in the South China Sea.

It is possible that historical claims are not about attachment to a specific piece of land, as

evidenced by the sweeping nature of the nine-dashed line. Rather, China's concern may be in recalling the traditional hierarchical Asian paradigm in which the "middle kingdom" acted as the center of a tributary system of various levy-paying states. In exchange, the Chinese Emperor would offer protection to a series of states whose relative power was starkly inferior to China's (Percival, 2007). This system, which was in use throughout most of China's history, ended with European colonialism in Asia, particularly with the French colonization of Vietnam in 1885, during which China failed to protect its tributary client state (Brocheux, 2009). While the nature of this tributary arrangement changed throughout China's history, such as the privatization of trade and establishment of a customs system by the Kangxi Emperor in the late 17th century, the Sino-centric nature of such a system heralds many of the underlying assumptions to the present-day Chinese historical claims in the South China Sea (Zhao, 2013). Alongside claims to the South China Sea, Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative is seen to be a resurrection of these tributary ideals, which will be further explored in chapter 4.

Regardless of the motivations or rationale behind the resurgent employment of historical claims in the South China Sea, these histories have become increasingly relevant to the debate over sovereignty and the occupation of uninhabitable islands in the region. The lack of legally legitimate historical claims to South China Sea islands (beyond the trade routes argument) leaves the Chinese perspective with no legal standing under international law. With each state using its own narrative to support their claims, there is little chance for historical and factual reconciliation – making the historical realities and claims of China crucial to understanding the current status of the region. As China continues to advance its activities in the South China Sea, it is crucial to develop a better understanding of why Beijing is in pursuit of a larger military and diplomatic presence in Southeast Asia. These realities will ultimately formulate what has come to be a new

de facto regime in the South China Sea to replace the unenforceable definitions of the UNCLOS regime and form the groundwork for scholars who seek to explain Chinese actions in the South China Sea. This new reality primarily consists of island-building, strategic interests (including mineral extraction), and fisheries.

Island Building

China has been incredibly active in asserting its position in the South China Sea by constructing a series of artificial islands on what were previously uninhabitable reefs, atolls, and rocks. This includes the construction of naval and air force facilities on Fiery Cross Reef and Mischief Reef, the latter of which lies within the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Philippines (Watkins, 2015). Although the Chinese government has consistently stated that the artificially constructed islands are for civilian purposes only, the specifications of the construction leave that statement in doubt (Stashwick, 2016). One example can be found at Cuerteron Reef, where sophisticated radar facilities have been built alongside military bunkers and observation towers (Fatzick, 2017).

China's island reclamation has been done at a level of sophistication that shows the Chinese government's commitment to securing the South China Sea. Fiery Cross Reef, which began with only a few rocks reaching from the underwater reef to breach the surface, is now a 665-acre island. Satellite imagery shows that the level of sophistication on the island military base has grown to include four basketball courts, two tennis courts, a running track, and a multipurpose sports field. The completed facilities at Mischief Reef include a dozen tennis courts and a deep-water naval port that has been properly dredged for large naval vessels (Beech, 2016). In addition to naval

facilities, it is also clear that these island bases are being equipped for the PLA Air Force. Mischief Reef features a 10,000-foot military-grade runway capable of launching sophisticated surveillance flights, while Subi Reef has a similar runway with hangars that would enable the storage and launch of strategic bombers such as the H6-K (BBC, 2016). In regard to the wider question of a resolution to the South China Sea disputes, it is clear that China's artificially constructed islands are meant to cement its interests and legitimate its claims to the region, despite their irrelevance under UNCLOS definitions of territorial water.

In addition to the construction of artificial islands in the South China Sea, the institution of an air identification zone (ADIZ) well outside of Chinese waters in the East China Sea has alarmed regional and global stakeholders. It is therefore concerning for stability in the region that China has begun preparations to institute similar ADIZs in the South China Sea. Such an action would require all vessels and aircraft in the South China Sea to register their routes and receive permission from the Chinese military, which is far better equipped to enforce those regulations than any other state in the region (AMTI, 2015). For now, China's Defense Ministry says that "a whole range of factors should also be taken into account before establishing an ADIZ," signaling that the actions of other states could prompt a Chinese attempt to implement an ADIZ (Ikeshima, 2016). Some actions are already being taken by the Chinese government, such as the redrafting of the 1984 "National Maritime Traffic Safety Law" that would require all foreign submarines to register with the Chinese military before entering the South China Sea and remain surfaced flying its national flag while within "Chinese waters" (AsianLII, 2017).

Strategic Interests: Natural Resources and Trade

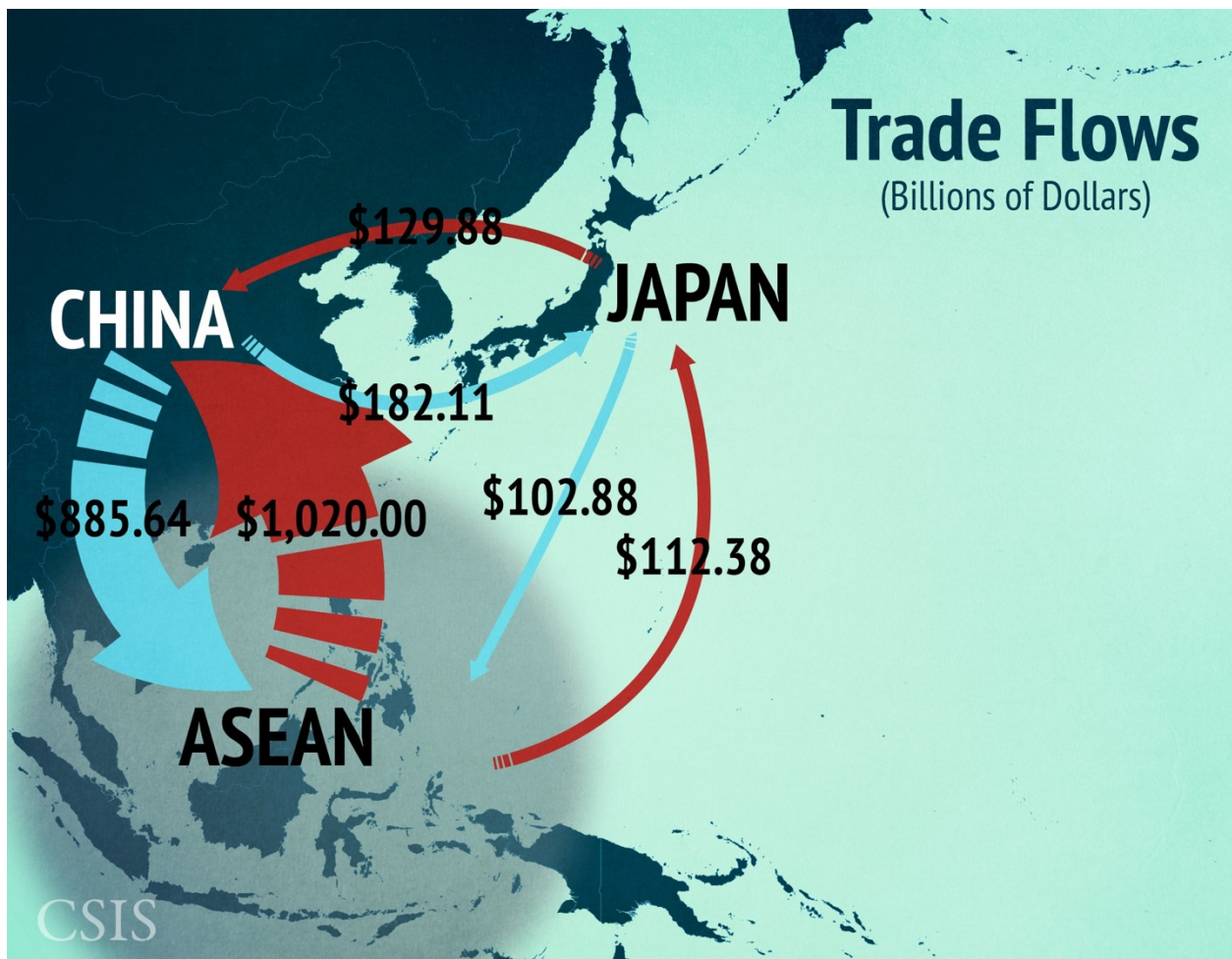
Of the many and varied interests behind China's sweeping claim to the South China Sea, some of the most prominent are those of the China National Offshore Oil Company (CNOOC). In 1992, Randal Thompson, an American oilman from Colorado, proposed a plan to the board of the CNOOC to allow his company to conduct surveys of areas west of the Spratly Islands (150 miles from the coast of Vietnam, 620 miles from China's coast). At the same time, the National People's Congress approved legislation that asserted China's claims to the region, enabling the CNOOC to distribute exploration rights (Garver, 1992). What ensued was a series of well-publicized disagreements between Vietnam and China over the placement of drilling rigs in or near Vietnamese waters, which China claims as its own (Hayton, 2014). In 2016, Vietnam again raised concern over the placement of China's Haiyang Shiyou 981 rig, to which a Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman responded: "To our knowledge, China's Haiyang Shiyou 981 drilling platform is working in totally indisputable waters under China's jurisdiction" (Ives, 2016). The placement of the same oil rig in 2014 caused violent riots in 22 of Vietnam's 63 provinces, with Vietnamese laborers attacking Chinese businessmen and protesting outside of Chinese factories (Buckley, 2014).

The case of Vietnam is one example in a trend of conflicts over the potentially valuable natural resources under the South China Sea. The Chinese government (via a study conducted by the CNOOC) estimates that there are up to 125 billion barrels of oil and 500 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in the South China Sea. If true, this would dwarf China's current proven oil reserves of 14.7 billion barrels of oil and 3.1 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, in addition to large amounts of combustible ice in the South China Sea (中国石油网, 2014). It is important to note that the estimates of hydrocarbon reserves widely vary based upon source, with the CNOOC's estimate

being one of the highest (USEIA, 2013). In 2013, the CNOOC’s offshore drilling platforms in the South China Sea were producing 800,000 barrels of oil per day (Daniels, 2013).

The flow of oil resources, major trade flows between ASEAN members and China, and its place as a trading corridor from Asia to the rest of the world makes the South China Sea one of the most crucial shipping lanes, but also the most disputed (see figure 3) (Roman, 2016). The European Union and the United States have taken particular interest in maintaining safe passage through the South China Sea, despite the heated disputes, by enacting regular military patrols and shows of force (Ali, 2016). However, ASEAN member states have shown little interest in following suit, including the Philippines, which discontinued joint patrols with the U.S. in October of 2016 (Moss, 2016). With roughly USD 2 trillion flowing through the South China Sea between ASEAN and

Figure 3: Trade Flows in the South China Sea



China each year, maintaining Chinese shipping in the region is vital to China's national economy (see figure 3) (AMTI, 2017). For an interconnected region that relies so heavily upon a disputed area for trade, cooperation – and in some cases, acquiescence to Chinese claims -- have been seen as crucial to continued stability.

Fisheries

Often overlooked as a small facet of a global security problem, fish supplies and disputes over valuable fisheries are as serious an obstacle to cooperation in the South China Sea as oil and gas resources. Between 1977 and 1990, China's fish production increased from 3.3 million tons to 6.8 million tons, worth \$1.6 billion (Catley, 1997). By 2013, that number had risen to 61.7 million tons, over one third of world production, facilitated by a massive fishing fleet of over 200,000 vessels (Hong, 2015). In 2012, Filipino fishermen were chased away from Scarborough Shoal by Chinese fishing vessels and coast guard ships, but in October of 2016, the Chinese ships departed after a state visit by the Filipino President to Beijing (Paddock, 2016). This pattern of confrontation and de-escalation has often occurred over the valuable fisheries that lie within disputed waters or near disputed islands in the South China Sea and represent the volatility such tensions pose to the status quo.

In considering facets of the South China Sea disputes that define the discrepancies of the stakeholders and are most likely to disrupt the political balance that has maintained peace, fisheries are second only to sovereignty. In 2012, twelve percent of global fish supplies came from the South China Sea (worth \$21.8 billion). Given that the massive volume of fish extraction has heightened the stakes over control of these fisheries, it is further concerning that overfishing has become a

serious problem in the region (Schoefield, 2016). A 2015 study found that 55% of the world's fishing vessels operated in the South China Sea, and that fish populations had declined between 70% and 90% since 1950 (Sumaila, 2016). The responsibilities of environmental degradation, the financial value of fish markets, and the livelihoods of millions of workers are all heavily affected by the ongoing disputes and incidents in the region. The current realities in the South China Sea are a crucial foundation and context for further work that seeks to explain the disputes.

UNCLOS and Conclusions for the Current State of the South China Sea

China's historical claims, alongside the consideration of interests in natural resources and trade, provide the initial framework for a common context amongst the claimants in the South China Sea disputes. These de facto considerations have begun to overwhelm the legal regime of UNCLOS as the ASEAN-China dialogues have dropped the subject of the South China Sea from their agendas in recent years and claimants appear to be taking actions so as to lessen tensions with China (Lee, 1999). The natural gas and petroleum reserves, and the maintenance of open and secure trade lanes in the South China Sea are all of particular interest to China as its economy continues to develop at an annual rate of 7% (World Bank). Despite the opposition from ASEAN member states, China remains by far the largest regional actor, and must therefore be considered as the dominant player in the South China Sea disputes. For this reason, the driving factors of Chinese action in the South China Sea are of vital concern to scholars and policy makers. In an exercise of realpolitik, China's sweeping claims – although well outside of the confines of international law – must undoubtedly be considered alongside a diverse understanding of the disputes when seeking to explore the reasons for Chinese action. (Again, see figure 1 for Chinese

claims)

With China's rejection of the Peace Palace arbitration decision and rejection of UNCLOS, international treaties have failed to resolve the South China Sea disputes and the theoretical framework for the study of the disputes has become more complex. As scholars and professionals continue attempts to propose solutions that incorporate UNCLOS, or even remain bound by its terms, the realities in the region have departed from any semblance of the treaty while China constructs artificial islands in international and foreign waters and asserts historical claims that are outside the framework of international law. While Chinese standoffs escalate with the Philippines, Vietnam, and other claimants, the need to understand these actions is increasingly urgent. The new structure that is developing is based upon the forced relevance of Chinese historical claims (although they must be critically considered for factual accuracy) and the economic and strategic factors that constitute the dynamic nature of the region. This host of realities in the South China Sea inform scholarly work, such as this, that seek to identify the underlying motivations of increased Chinese action in the South China Sea.

Chapter 2

Chinese Nationalism: Theory, Hypotheses, and Results

Introduction

The study of nationalism has become increasingly interesting to scholars who seek to identify and explain its application in modern China. A common assumption is that China's authoritarian regime has encouraged nationalism to support foreign and domestic policy goals, but observers have struggled to prove this repeated claim. In many cases, propaganda and misinformation are conflated with nationalistic sentiment – a distinction that is important in a country where media is state-controlled.

Chinese national leaders have recently introduced nationalistic terms to the Chinese lexicon through their purposeful application to international events (such as perceived imperialism of foreign countries) and propagation by Chinese political leaders. The Chinese Dream (中国梦), Young Chinese Nationalists (小粉红), and National Self Confidence (民族自信心) are some of the most recent additions to common syntax, and represent the manipulation or mobilization of nationalistic sentiment in both state and social media.

This chapter explores state media coverage of the South China Sea to determine how coverage has changed between 1970 and 2015. The model also tests for the presence of nationalism based on a dictionary of nationalistic terms in the article's original Mandarin. The findings are surprising given the context of other scholarship and indicate that while state media

is certainly a political tool of propaganda on the issue of the South China Sea, nationalism does not play a major role in Chinese policy towards the South China Sea.

A Brief Survey of Chinese Nationalism

In his book, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson (1983) established the scholarly definition of nations and nationalism as the power of an imagined community. In the early 1990s, Townsend (1992) marked what he called the “culturalism to nationalism thesis.” That is, the notion that prior to the establishment of the People’s Republic of China and Mao Zedong’s purging of China’s cultural history, the country and its people were driven by a sense of superior culture. Furthermore, the Chinese identity was defined by culture, and not a nation or state until Qin Shi Huan’s unification of China in 221 BCE (and for several periods from then until 1949) (Li, 1975). Zhao (2004) has conducted a thorough investigation of Chinese nationalism from a historical perspective. In his study of the long arc of Chinese history, Zhao finds a pattern of leaders and officials who promoted distinctly nationalistic ideas in promotion of the Chinese State that he sees as similar to the rhetoric of China’s current regime. Excluded from Zhao’s comprehensive study and similar works is an analysis of current Chinese leadership in the context of regional territorial disputes over claims to the South China Sea.

Chinese nationalism has been explored both as a new phenomenon and a political application of traditional tendencies of national pride by the Chinese Communist Party Government. Weiss (2016), specifically investigated the employment of nationalism as a tool of foreign policy. Conducting her work by following the nationalistic and patriotic endeavors of individuals, Weiss produced one of the most comprehensive works on Chinese nationalism to date. This, of course, raises the question of differentiating nationalism and patriotism for the purposes of empirical study. Davidov (2009), presented a study that sought to differentiate between constructive patriotism and nationalism for the purposes of further work on either subject. For

Figure 4: Davidov's (2009) Nationalism Definition

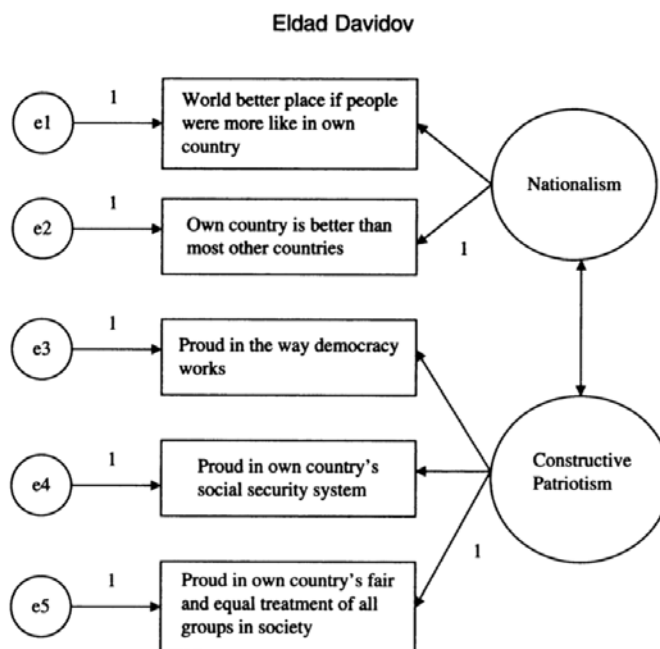


Fig. 1 CFA of nationalism and CP.

Davidov, constructive patriotism was loyalty to one's own country while nationalism was the sentiment that one's own country was superior to other countries. Nationalism was given certain negative and falsified connotations, meaning that the person with nationalistic sentiment was often informed by false or exaggerated sources. He successfully proved that constructive patriotism and

nationalism are distinct constructs - enabling the use of nationalism in coding schemes for this and other projects (see figure 4). While the nationalism literature thoroughly analyzes the general nature of Chinese nationalism and its effect on the past, there is little work (with the exception of Weiss, 2016) on the current employment of nationalism by the Chinese government as a policy tool, and no empirical studies that seek to test the validity of the common notion that Chinese nationalism is driving China's interests in the South China Sea.

Theoretical Application of Chinese Nationalism

I used general definitions of nationalism to create a dictionary of Chinese nationalistic terms but used Davidov's (2009) work to operationalize nationalism and separate it from constructive patriotism. In this project, nationalism is defined as the ideology that one's own country is superior to another (in some way). Nationalism within newspaper text can indicate general attitudes on any given subject, but the most interesting and useful aspect of studying nationalism in this way is to analyze if, to what degree, and in what ways the government has employed nationalism for public support of the government and for specific policies such as increased action in the South China Sea. Investigating nationalism's role in Chinese foreign policy and domestic support is one of the ultimate goals of this project, alongside a better understanding of Chinese actions in the South China Sea.

A rich literature exists on nationalism's application to domestic support of the government in addition to efforts to specifically increase public support for foreign policy goals. Trenin (2004) conducted an early study of President Putin's actions in Chechnya and found that violently suppressing the "restless frontier of Russia" cemented Putin's popularity at the beginning of his

Presidency. Isajiw (2016) detailed President Vladimir Putin's 2014 invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent annexation of Crimea. He found that President Putin's popularity surged following the invasion, and that his continued high popularity (over 80% approval in 2017) can be largely attributed to the way that his actions play to the ideas of Russian nationalism. In 2016, *Foreign Affairs* ran an article entitled "Why Putin Took Crimea" (Treisman, 2016). The article addressed both the possibility of nationalistic and imperialistic motives for the Russian invasion, as well as the very practical Russian concerns of losing access to the Black Sea. Regardless of the motivations for onset, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has bolstered public support for President Putin's regime. The case of Russia's invasion of Ukraine is, in many ways, similar to China's actions to control the South China Sea. Similar to President Putin, the Chinese Communist Party (and President Xi Jinping in particular) have fostered incredible national pride following acts of aggression or inflammatory statements.

Darr (2011) attempted to identify the employment of nationalism for support of the Chinese government through the use of censorship, legal codes, and official publications. He concluded that the Chinese Government "... produces popular legitimacy by inculcating an attachment to Chinese national identity among the public (Darr, 2011)." The solidification of a national Chinese identity was particularly crucial following the disasters of the Mao era, which culminated in the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. Zhao (1994) conducted a survey of Chinese educational campaigns and required materials and found a strong message of patriotic and nationalistic loyalty to the party and to the Chinese identity. In a subsequent study, Zhao (2004) found the dynamics of the Chinese national identity to be almost wholly based in a strong employment of nationalism by government publications, ranging from education to news media. In search of an answer to whether

Chinese nationalism is relevant to Chinese actions in the South China Sea disputes, this project first tested for the presence of nationalism in Chinese state-owned newspapers.

Bossism Politics in China

Alongside the employment of nationalism to solidify Chinese identity and unity is the role of what has become known as “bossism politics.” Slater (2003) conducted a study of 1980s Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad’s personalization campaign in Malaysia as an investigation of authoritarian tactics. He argues that autocrats employ a variety of tactics including machine (Singapore, Vietnam, China 1976-present), strongman (Suharto-Indonesia, Marcos-Philippines, Musharraf-Pakistan), bossism (Mao-China, Mugabe-Zimbabwe), and junta (Burma, Thailand, Korea) politics (Slater 2003, pg. 86). Bossism, in context with other features of authoritarian regimes, is defined by the removal or bureaucratic circumventing of rivals and the personalization, or personal centrality of national policy making.

It is possible to view the recent actions of Chinese President Xi Jinping as the re-emergence of bossism in Chinese politics and government - a topic not yet explored by the political science literature but that has been a topic of great interest for foreign policy experts. Bo Xilai, who had been Minister of Commerce and was the party secretary of Chongqing in 2012, was sentenced to life imprisonment on corruption charges in 2013 in a move that was seen by many to be Mr. Xi’s attempt to remove a rival who had been considered for the presidency when Mr. Xi was selected in 2012. Bo’s political fall was followed by another official on the Chinese politburo, Sun Zhengcai, who had succeeded Bo as party secretary in Chongqing (Nathan, 2017). Further indications of a Mao-like cult of personality arose from the 2017 Chinese Communist Party

congress, in which no possible successor to Mr. Xi was elevated to the standing committee of the politburo, as has been customary since the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. All members of the standing committee announced at the October 2017 congress are over 60 years old, making them ineligible to succeed Xi in 2022, and neither of his observed proteges (both in their 50s) were elevated to the necessary positions in the politburo (Jakhar, 2017). These appointments indicate that Xi may plan to stay in office further than the end of his second term in 2022, yet certainly exemplify the singular importance of Xi Jinping in today's China. Although difficult to measure, the outcomes of this study of nationalism may enable further conclusions to be drawn on the topic of bossism politics in China.

Incidents in the South China Sea

The South China Sea has long been a disputed territory, but the contemporary disputes began with the Chinese invasion and seizure of the Vietnamese-held Paracel Islands in 1974, shortly after the Paris Peace Accords were signed that ended the American Vietnam War (Ngo, 2014). For this reason, I begin my analysis of the disputes in 1970 and end the time period in 2015. Johnston (1998) investigated Chinese actions surrounding the third Taiwan Strait crisis in the late 1990s on an individual level to discern how often China initiated a violent incident and the steps China took once it became involved in an incident. Johnston found that, for the most part, China avoided disputes, but once in a dispute China would escalate the violence of the dispute. When analyzing China's overall attitude towards potentially militarized disputes, Johnston writes: "China has historically stressed the limited, political uses of coercive diplomacy, and has eschewed crusading, offensive wars *a outrance*" (Johnston, 1998). In a similar way, this project will collect

data from militarized incidents in the South China Sea from 1970 to 2015 to discern a trend in their occurrence, nature, and relation to nationalistic state media reporting.

Incidents were measured by several sources. The primary dataset is the Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) incident-level disaggregated dataset collected by the Correlates of War Project (Palmer et al, 2015). I combined it with supplementary data from incident timelines compiled by the *Center for New American Security*, the *International Crisis Group*, the *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, and various news sources from the United States, Indonesia, the Philippines, China, Vietnam, and Malaysia. The Militarized Interstate Dispute Incident dataset accounts for the dates, involved parties, and occurrence of each incident. The dataset requires an incident to experience direct government involvement and is collected from well-regarded news media publications including *The New York Times*, *The BBC*, *Xinhua*, *Der Spiegel*, and *The Guardian*. The supplemented data from other sources followed the same coding scheme. The data was organized into incident-years, or the total amount of incidents that occur each year. Multi-year incidents were only counted during the year that they began.

Funded Research & Public Literature in China

Through research travel funded by the Penn State Schreyer Honors College, I was able to observe the availability of public literature in China on the subject of the South China Sea. My investigation showed that Chinese actions in the South China Sea are being used as a tool of propaganda and that the factual accuracy of the public information is generally poor. Primarily, the information available was focused on spreading the intended message of the Chinese

Government. My private¹ search of Beijing public and university libraries² yielded only a handful of informational books on the South China Sea, all of which used the traditional Chinese name for the South China Sea (南海, South Sea) and addressed only Chinese claims. In the largest bookstore in Beijing,³ the only book available on the South China Sea was a collection of anecdotal accounts of elderly Chinese fishermen (Colloquial Chinese: 老百姓) about the importance of the South China Sea to their way of life, entitled *The South Sea: The Sea of Ancestors and the Suppressed Dream*.⁴

Chinese Newspaper Selection and Coding Rules

All media in China are controlled by the state - either through central, provincial, or local government entities. Kennedy (2009) wrote of the importance of Chinese state media to maintain popular support, and Brady (2008) described state media publications as “thought work” meant to ensure popular support of the government. An ultimate goal of this project was to understand the actions of the central government in the South China Sea and to analyze central government foreign policy, necessitating the use of national newspapers. Newspapers remain a primary source of information for most Chinese. According to the World Values Survey, 19.2% of respondents to a 2013 study conducted by Beijing’s Peking University use the internet on a weekly basis (for any

¹ Due to the sensitivity of the topic in China, I was not able to alert the local authorities to my research intentions or inquire for assistance at public and university libraries.

² Specifically, I visited the libraries of 人民大学 (Renmin University) and 北京大学 (Peking University), two of the highest ranked and regarded Universities in China. Both are located in Beijing.

³ The bookstore was Wangfujing Bookstore, China, Beijing, Dongcheng, 王府井大街 218 号 邮政编码: 100006

⁴ The book was 南海：祖宗海与平梦 (English Translation: *The South Sea: The Sea of Ancestors and the Suppressed Dream*)

reason, not just to read news articles), compared to 31.2% who read newspapers weekly. Fifty-one percent of respondents said that they never use the internet (Sheng, 2013).

In searching for state-sponsored messages in media, it was also essential to limit my newspaper selection to exclude those publications that are relatively independent of state media control, such as newspapers in semi-autonomous Hong Kong or Macao. To test for the presence of nationalism in such publications, this project used two newspapers. First, the 人民日报 (People's Daily) is China's premier newspaper publication and is considered to be the mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party (Wu, 1994). According to its own website, the *People's Daily's* average circulation is 3 million, making it the second largest newspaper in China.⁵ Historical records of the People's Daily, accessed via the Penn State library, contained a searchable database of articles published by the newspaper within the time period of this project (People's Daily). After selecting only those articles with “南海” (South China Sea) in the title, the time period contained 750 relevant articles.

The second newspaper that will be used for this project is the 解放军报 (People's Liberation Army Daily), which is a military newspaper published in Beijing for public circulation. It is expected that this newspaper will not only detail government positions and propaganda, but also cover the topic of the South China Sea more intensively due to its Military focus. Through funding from the Schreyer Honors College, 972 articles were collected in the time period and with “南海” (South China Sea) in the title from the digital databases at the U.S. Library of Congress (PLA Daily).

⁵ This number is self-reported by the People's Daily, and can be found at <http://en.people.cn/90827/90828/index.html>

Scholars who have previously attempted to devise a method of determining overall sentiment in a national newspaper, including the People’s Daily, have used a method known as “bootstrapping” to automate the collection of words (Li and Hovy, 2014). Technological limitations exist for the automated mapping of Chinese words due to the lack of spaces between Chinese characters, therefore necessitating a manual coding scheme. “Bootstrapping” methods have, however, established the use of a “term dictionary” that is used to test for sentiment. Though the sentiment of a newspaper’s coverage is not the same, nor as specific as this project’s search for nationalism, the use of a “term dictionary” can be applied to identify the employment of nationalistic terms. In order to test for the presence of nationalism in these two newspaper publications, it is necessary to compile a list of words and phrases that are considered to denote nationalism. After consulting with native Chinese speakers and relevant scholars,⁶ the validity of the terms below was confirmed and coding the newspaper articles consisted of a total of ten different nationalistic terms. The terms were coded both individually (occurrences per article) and

Table 2: Terms to Denote Nationalism in Newspaper Articles

Chinese Term	English Translation	Chinese Term	English Translation
自豪	Pride	主权	Sovereign
民族自信心	National self-confidence	帝国	Empire
中国梦	The Chinese Dream	爱国主义	Patriotism
凝聚力	National Cohesion	殖民	Colonial
小粉红	Young Chinese Nationalists	帝国主义	Imperialism

⁶ Gaofan Zhang is a graduate student at George Washington University and a Chinese native speaker from Shanghai; Jade Atwill is the Asian Studies Librarian at Penn State University Libraries; Jessica Chen Weiss is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Yale University and Research Fellow at the MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies. She is a specialist in Chinese Nationalism and author of *Powerful Patriots Nationalist Protest in China's Foreign Relations* (2014)

as a whole (total nationalistic terms per article). The final step was to aggregate the articles and record the occurrences of each nationalistic term per year, and the total nationalistic terms that appear each year.

Coding the Newspapers

This project utilized Amazon Web Services' (AWS) Mechanical Turk platform (Mturk),⁷ which offers developer tools to create a coding scheme, pay “workers” per task completed, and establish prerequisites to completing a task. To code the occurrence of the ten nationalistic terms displayed above, each article was coded *twice* by unique workers proficient in Chinese. The workers were asked to identify the date of the article (displayed as a PDF), interpret the length as short, medium, or long, and record the occurrence of each of the ten nationalistic terms. The two unique codings of each article were cross-referenced and re-coded if discrepancies were present to ensure inter-coder reliability and the overall integrity of the coding scheme. A total of 1,722 articles were each coded twice over the course of the month of August 2017. This work was financially sponsored by an Erickson Discovery Grant from the Penn State Assistant Vice President of Undergraduate Research.

⁷ I was first introduced to Amazon Mechanical Turk by a student in the Asian Studies PhD seminar at Penn State University named Yao Yao Dai. Yao Yao Dai is a PhD candidate in Political Science and Asian Studies at Penn State University

Hypothesis One

The intensity of nationalistic reporting in Chinese State Media publications regarding the South China Sea rises as conflict incidents increase in frequency.

I expect that the total amount of nationalistic terms recorded each year from the combined coding of the PLA Daily and the People's Daily newspapers will increase in frequency as incidents in the South China Sea increase in frequency (again recorded as total incidents per year). This is expected by Brady (2008), Kennedy (2009), Weiss (2014), and other scholars of Chinese nationalism. If nationalistic terms are found in these two Chinese newspapers and the frequency occurs as expected, the finding will be the first quantitative study to identify and observe the role of nationalism in regard to Chinese actions in the South China Sea. A confirmation of this relationship would support nationalism's role in Chinese foreign policy and be the groundwork for further studies of Chinese nationalism as a tool of government support. If nationalistic terms are not found to be highly prevalent in these two Chinese newspapers or the frequency does not occur as expected, it will disprove many of the assumptions of Chinese actions in the South China Sea, including the employment of conflict to foster support of the government and provide orientation for the future study of the disputes by eliminating what many observers view as the underlying motivation of Chinese aggression.

Hypothesis Two

Irrespective of the presence of nationalistic terms, when incidents occur, reporting on the South China Sea will increase at a rate higher than the rate of increase in incidents.

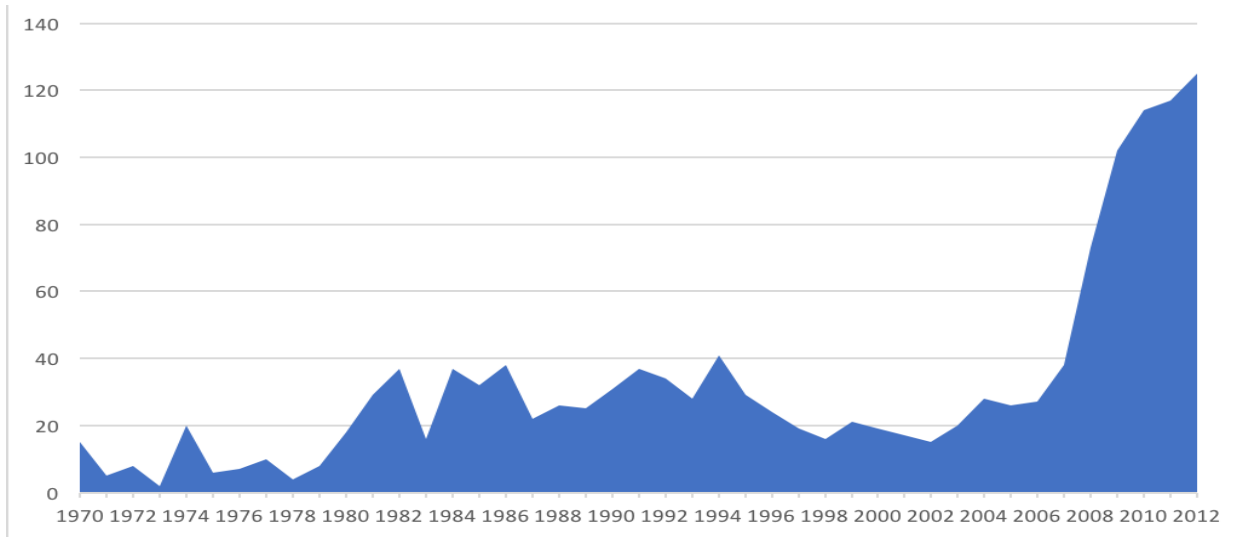
Similar to the justifications underpinning Hypothesis One, Hypothesis Two expects that reporting on the South China Sea (articles per year) will increase at a *higher* rate than the increases of incidents per year. This hypothesis draws from the theoretical expectation that aggression in the South China Sea, particularly aggression that can be viewed as aggression towards China, will be employed by the government as a propaganda tool for domestic support. If true, this hypothesis may also enable further exploration of the existence of bossism politics by Xi Jinping and his government, and the employment of propaganda techniques to bolster Xi's cult of personality and his campaigns - in this case, Chinese expansion in the South China Sea - in the minds of the Chinese public.

Results

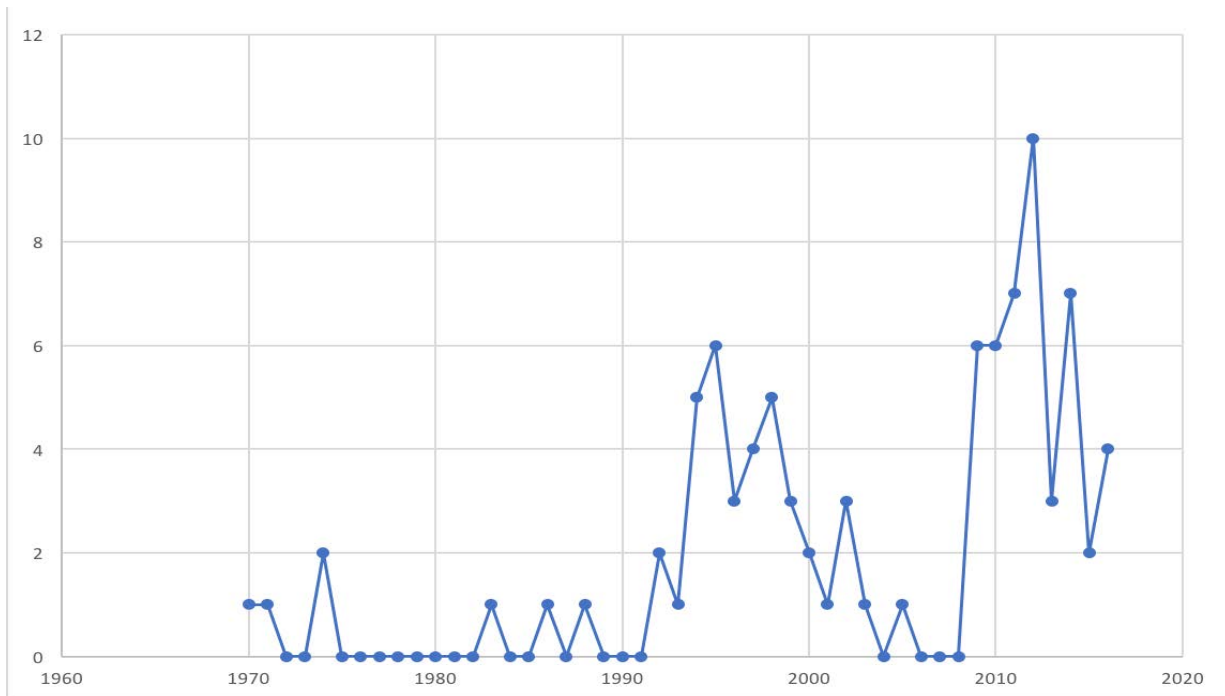
Graphs 1 and 2 show the trend of incidents and articles per year, with the maximum number of incidents and articles occurring in 2012. Based on the graphs, it appears that both follow a relatively similar trendline, but that the volume of articles is higher between 2008-2012. The $n(\text{articles})$ is 1366 and the $n(\text{incidents})$ is 89. Some articles were removed for the model due to a lack of two years of incident data. Graph 3 shows the total number of nationalistic terms used in these articles each year, which have a lower than expected frequency of occurrence, with a total $n(\text{terms})$ of 129. Based on graphical representation however, the terms do behave more similarly to incidents than to article trends. Regression results in figure 1 show an R squared of .478 and definitive insignificance for nationalistic terms when regressed on incidents per year. Newspaper articles per year are, of course, highly significant when regressed on incidents per year. The slope

of incidents per year is 0.107 while the slope of articles per year during the same time period is 1.551. Based on initial data results, Hypothesis One is *false*, and Hypothesis Two is *true*.

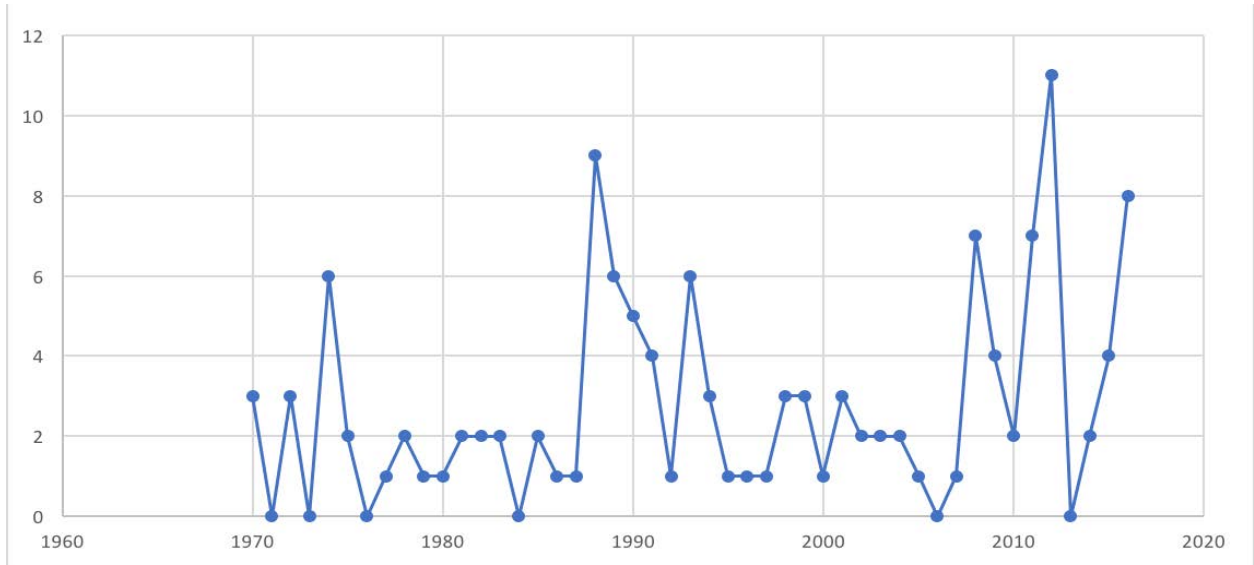
Graph 1: Articles



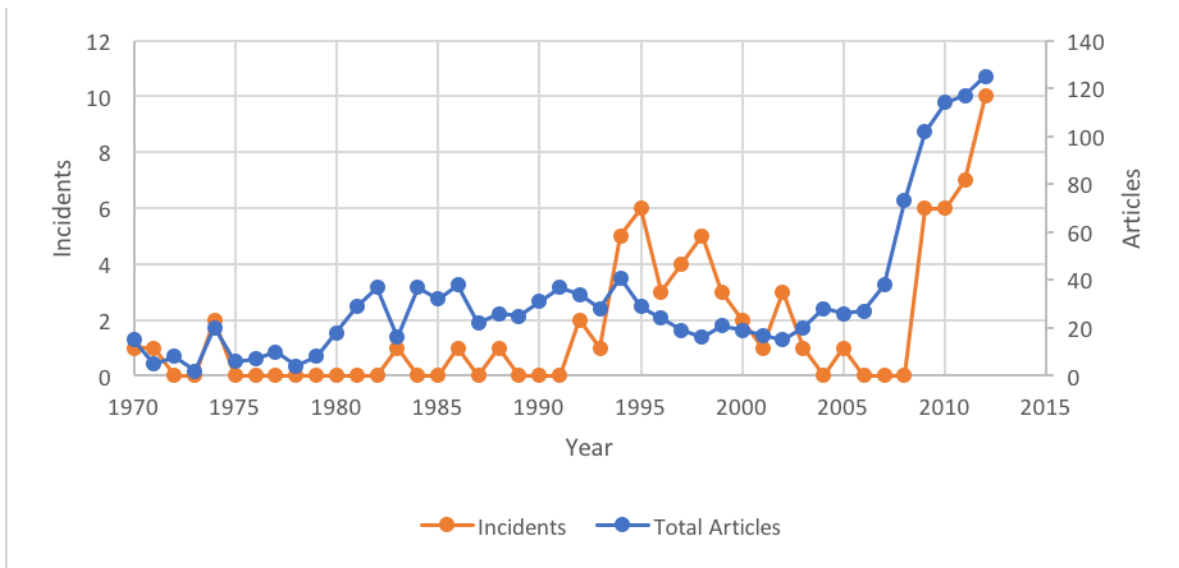
Graph 2: Incidents



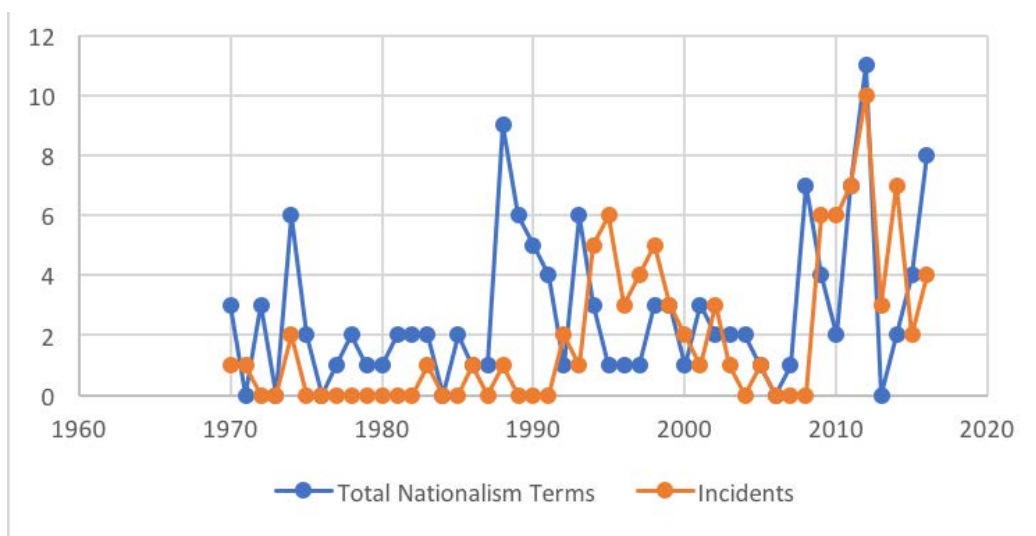
Graph 3: Nationalism Terms



Graph 4: Incidents and Articles



Graph 5: Incidents and Nationalism Terms



Analysis

Hypothesis One, that nationalism in newspaper articles will increase as incidents increase, is shown to have a highly insignificant coefficient in the regression results. Graphical representation, however, shows that nationalistic terms trend similarly to incidents more so than to articles. With a relatively low amount of nationalistic terms observed (A *total* of 129 terms from 1399 articles), initial data results seem to indicate that nationalism is not overly present in state media reporting - an incredibly interesting conclusion that will be further discussed in Chapter 4 - but that indicates that nationalism is *not* the driving force behind Chinese actions in the South China Sea and that other answers must be explored.

Hypothesis Two predicted that articles would increase at a *faster* rate than the increase in incidents over the time period. This is initially proven true by the slopes of each variable - both positive: 0.107 slope for incidents and 1.551 slope for articles, meaning that articles on the South China Sea are increasing at a rate 14 times faster than the increase in incidents. Fascinatingly,

graph 4 shows that the vast majority of this change occurred between 2008 and 2012. Incidents continue to steadily increase, but the number of articles that cover the South China Sea increases from 29 in 2007 to 128 in 2012. This finding is very significant to the future study of the South China Sea disputes and indicates the possibility of bossism politics resurging under Chinese President Xi Jinping. The role of this hypothesis in indicating bossism politics and other trends of Chinese politics and Chinese actions in the South China Sea will also be fully explored in Chapter 4.

Conclusion

The nationalism model has shown that nationalistic sentiment in newspaper articles is not the driving force behind incidents in the South China Sea. A major nuance of this finding is that while the amount of newspaper articles that mention “South Sea” in the title are very highly correlated with incidents, (which is not a profound finding on its own) the slope of incidents and articles (0.107 and 1.551, respectively) show that coverage of the disputes is increasing at a much faster rate than incidents are occurring. This may not only indicate the presence of a certain level of bossism politics in China, but that news coverage is being used to foster public support for the government and the cause of the “South Sea,” though without the presence of overtly nationalistic terms.

Table 3: Nationalism Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.691 ^a	.478	.451	1.796

a. Predictors: (Constant), Total Nationalism Terms, Newspaper Articles Summed

Table 4: Nationalism Model Results

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.130	.435		-.299	.767
	Total Newspaper Articles	.055	.011	.671	4.962	.000
	Total Nationalism Terms	.036	.131	.037	.272	.787

a. Dependent Variable: Incidents

Table 5: Nationalism Model Correlations

		Incidents	Newspaper Articles Summed	Total Nationalism Terms
Incidents	Pearson Correlation	1	.690**	.344*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.019
	N	46	43	46
Total Newspaper Articles	Pearson Correlation	.690**	1	.534**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	43	43	43
Total Nationalism Terms	Pearson Correlation	.344*	.534**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.019	.000	
	N	46	43	46

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Chapter 3

Chinese Regional Hegemony: Theory, Hypothesis, and Results

Introduction

This section establishes a second model for incidents in the South China Sea based on the theories of hegemony and power transition theory. Following the failure of the nationalism model to explain incidents and Chinese actions in the South China Sea, this model is intended to answer the original question: “What is driving Chinese actions in the South China Sea?” This model indicates that the answer is a geo-political power transition and China’s rising regional and relative global hegemony is perhaps driving actions and expanded media coverage of the disputes. Three different measures were ultimately used to determine the correlation between incidents and hegemony, with profoundly positive results.

Brief Survey of Hegemony and Power Transition Theory

The long arcs of hegemony are examined by Modelski and Thompson (1988) from 1494-present using estimated naval tonnage as a quantitative measure for a single global hegemon. Boswell and Sweat (1991) expanded upon the same data as Modelski and Thompson (1988) by adding additional indicators of hegemony throughout the entire time period. Rather than relying almost exclusively on naval tonnage, Boswell and Sweat introduced further indicators of hegemony, with a focus on economic data. Although hegemony theory is less relevant today due to its original conclusion of a single global hegemon, the literature can be applied to a regional space (in this case, Asia), and aggregate measures can be applied to observe changing dynamics

between China, its neighbors, and the traditional global powers.

Upon applying the theories and measures of hegemony to a regional space, it becomes necessary to incorporate power transition theory to explain China's changing relationship with the region and the world, and in the specific case of the South China Sea. Lemke and Tammen (2003) have explored power transition theory in the specific case of China, and other scholars⁸ have examined the regional and global power transition from the United States to China, such as the comprehensive work by Tammen (2001). Scholars of power transition theory have not, however, employed the theory to a regional theatre and compared the change in the relative power of China and other Asian countries to examine the degree of a regional power transition that has accompanied China's recent rise as a global actor. Such an analysis could explain the driving forces behind China's actions in the South China Sea and the recent shift in the nature of the disputes.

Theoretical Application of Hegemony

Modelski and Thompson (1988) designed one of the founding projects in hegemony research. Their book identified a single global hegemon for the period 1494-1985, thereby observing long arcs of global hegemony. Modelski and Thompson exclusively used aggregate naval tonnage data (and estimates for earlier time periods) to identify hegemons in their dataset. Boswell and Sweat (1991) identified the same time series but added economic indicators in addition to naval tonnage. In applying the theory of hegemony to a regional theatre, scholars have

⁸ See overview by Lemke and Tammen. 2003. *International Interactions* 29(4)

identified different behaviors of regional hegemons and argued that those actions often act as additional indicators of hegemony.

In the context of South African regional hegemony, Miriam Prys (2008) identified these categories of actions as *outside-in* and *inside-out*. Outside-in refers to global actors or international institutions that interact with, or specifically confront the regional hegemon in a way that indicates such regional hegemony. Inside-out, however, refers to how a regional hegemon may choose to interact with the international community as a “gatekeeper” of its region (Such as the American Monroe Doctrine) or as a means of global power projection. The South China Sea is an interesting intersection of these two facets of regional hegemony that will enable post-model analysis, and remain in addition to (or as variants of) the traditional hegemonic principles of perception, projection, and provision (Joseph 2008, Rapkin 1990). The model that follows first determines that China is the regional hegemon through Modelski and Thompson’s (1988) measure of naval tonnage. Then, the model introduces additional economic indicators of hegemony and an ultimate test of whether these factors may be driving Chinese action in the South China Sea.

Theoretical Application of Power Transition Theory

In addition to theories of hegemony and, specifically, regional hegemony, power transition theory is an important element to both my model and the general ability to synthesize an explanation of Chinese actions in the South China Sea. Originally formulated by Organski (1958) as an explanation of power preponderance, Lemke and Kugler (1996) expanded upon the theory to analyze the choices and factors that lead a nation to the maintenance of peace and the status quo or preparation for war. Since then, the power transition theory literature has become vast and

dynamic, with Tammen (2001) introducing the present terminology of power transition theory and its application after the cold war, and Lemke (2002) introducing the notion of non-global (that is, regional) applications of power transition theory.

For this project, the idea of power transition theory has primarily to do with the global rise of China and the Middle Kingdom's trajectory to overtake the United States as the global hegemon in the coming decades. Regional transition from Japan, Korea, and the U.S. Navy to Chinese dominance - particularly in the South China Sea - is a defining characteristic of the disputes and a trend that can be observed through an empirical analysis of China's regional hegemony. If China's relative power is proven to be increasing, it will enable the application and further exploration of power transition theory in a global sense, but more interestingly (for this project) in the microcosm of the South China Sea.

Hegemony Indicator Selection

In order to measure Chinese hegemony, I employed Modelski and Thompson's (1988) original use of naval tonnage data, measured by Crisher and Souva's recently compiled Naval Power Dataset (2014). In addition to naval tonnage, I employed the additions first introduced in Boswell and Sweat's (1991) work: total exports and gross domestic product (both in current U.S. Dollars). Economic data were sourced from the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, and the World Bank. The time period remained the same as the nationalism model: 1970-2016.

Hypothesis One

China's relative hegemony will increase as incidents in the South China Sea increase.

Hypothesis One, the sole hypothesis of this model, is that hegemony, measured by naval tonnage, GDP, total exports, and trade balance with the world, will increase before incidents in the South China Sea become more numerous. If true, Hypothesis One enables the identification of not only present Chinese regional hegemony, but a growing level of regional hegemony. A second step is to compare Chinese naval tonnage and economic data to the United States (the current global hegemon) to assess whether a power transition is taking place. In the case of the South China Sea, a regional power transition may not only be taking place between China and its neighbors, but also of American economic weight and military assets in the region. If the two are not similarly increasing, it may suggest that Chinese action in the South China Sea is not being driven by a regional power transition, despite such a transition being present.

Results

Results of the model show Chinese hegemony to be a highly significant indicator of incidents, and that each of the hegemony variables are significant at the 5% level of significance. Graph 5 shows the steady increase in China's yearly naval tonnage, while graph 6 shows this change in Chinese naval tonnage alongside the drastic decline of U.S. naval tonnage. Graph 7 shows Chinese exports alongside incidents, which have a bivariate correlation of .572. Graph 8 shows that Chinese tonnage has surpassed regional rivals, including a comparison to the next-largest Asian countries: Japan and South Korea. Initially, these results show that Chinese actions

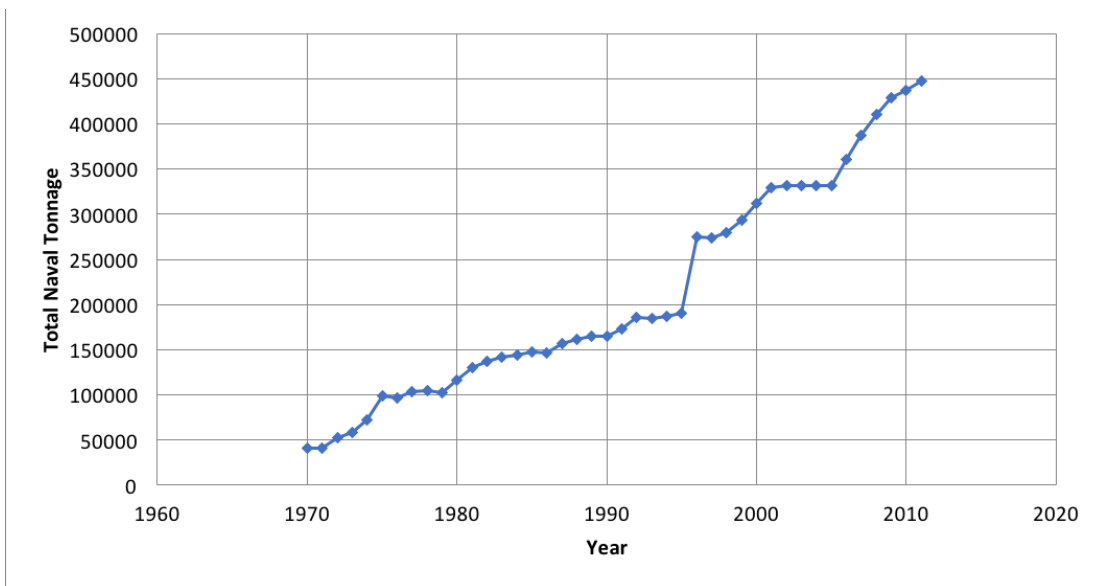
in the South China Sea are being driven, at least in part, by increasing levels of regional hegemony. Furthermore, graph 6 alongside the increase in the Chinese Gross Domestic Product (GDP) indicates that a global power transition may be taking place between the United States and China, and that this transition is perhaps playing out in the flashpoint of the South China Sea.

Hypothesis one has been proven true by the hegemony model, and indicates that incidents in the South China Sea are being partly driven by a regional power transition and China's increasing hegemony. With an R-squared value of .695, there are surely additional factors that have led to an increase in incidents and a drastic increase in their coverage by Chinese state media. Still, much of the conflict in the South China Sea can be explained by this shift in hegemony and enable further analysis of China's position in the South China Sea disputes and its wider foreign policy goals.

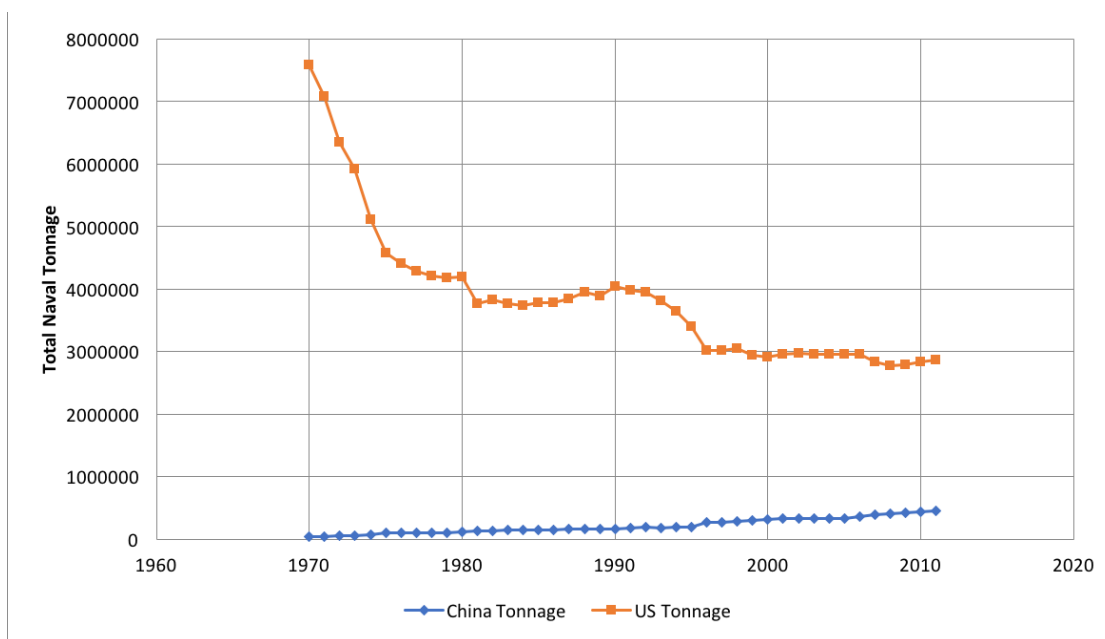
Conclusion

The hegemony model has proven to be a very accurate representation of the factors that may indicate an increasing number of incidents in the South China Sea. Both naval tonnage and the economic indicators of hegemony have shown high statistical correlation to incidents, with significance at the 5% level. Additionally, naval tonnage and economic data show the start of a drastic power transition between the United States and China that is seemingly manifest in the South China Sea disputes and possibly driving Chinese policy regarding the region.

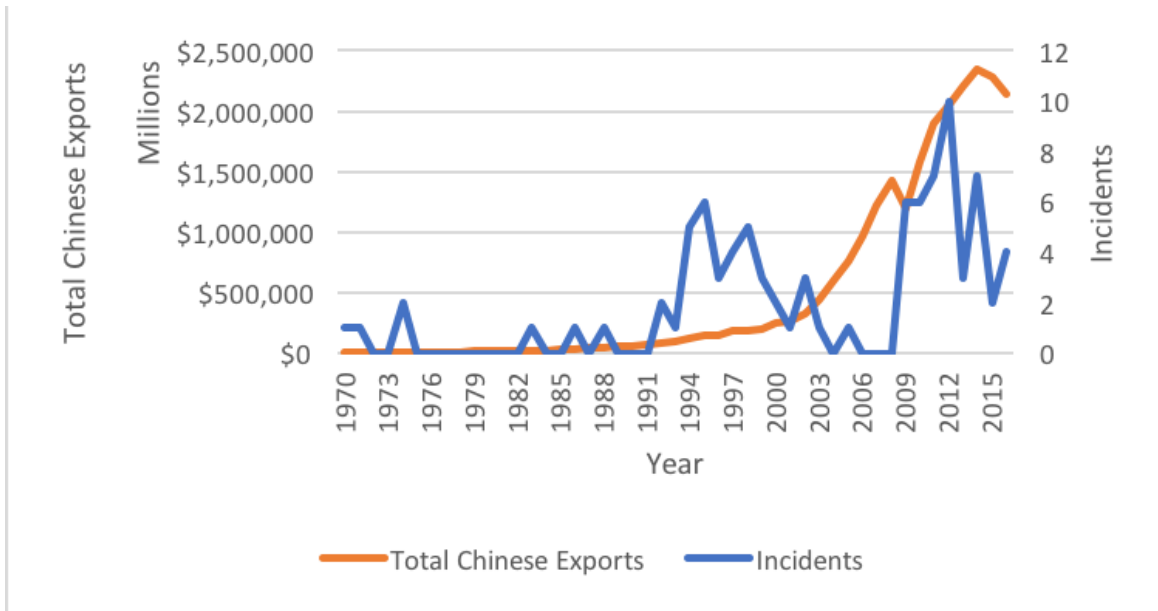
Graph 6: China Tonnage



Graph 7: China-U.S. Tonnage Comparison



Graph 8: Chinese Exports and Incidents



Graph 9: Asia Tonnage Comparison

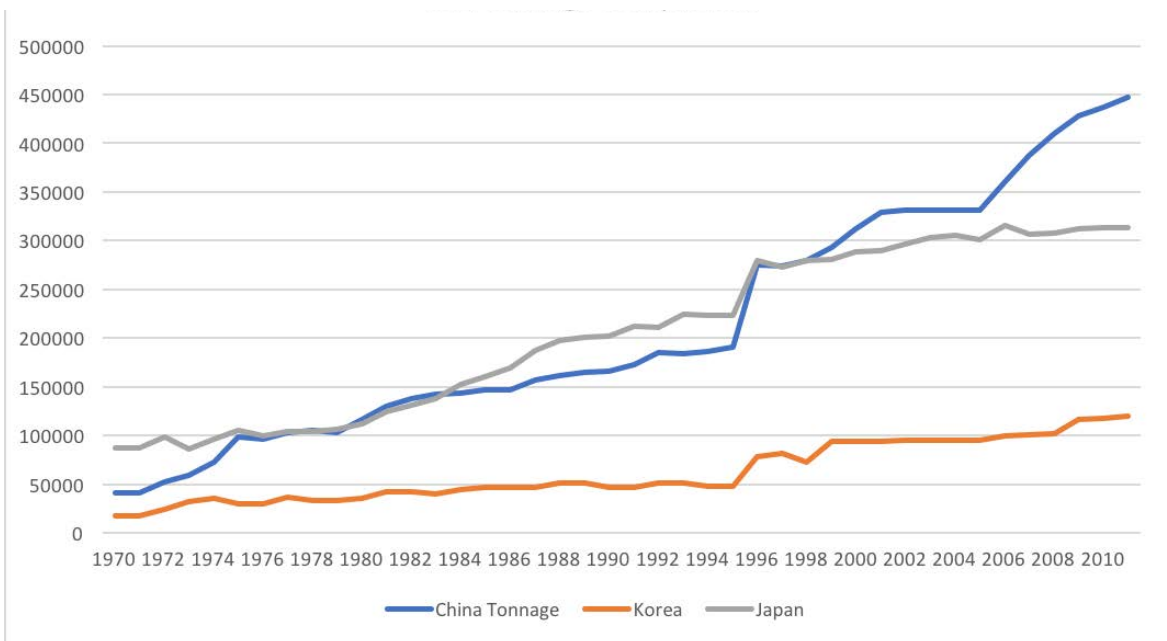


Table 6: Hegemony Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1		.695	.671	1.190

a. Predictors: (Constant), GDP in USD, China Tonnage, Chinese Exports to Wo

Table 7: Hegemony Model Results

Dependent Variable: Incidents

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	122.646 ^a	3	40.882	28.847	.000
Intercept	12.960	1	12.960	9.145	.004
ChinaTonnage	12.782	1	12.782	9.019	.005
ChineseExportstoWorld	70.169	1	70.169	49.512	.000
GDPinUSD	77.237	1	77.237	54.499	.000
Error	53.854	38	1.417		
Total	271.000	42			
Corrected Total	176.500	41			

a. R Squared = .695 (Adjusted R Squared = .671)

Table 8: Hegemony Model Correlations

		Incidents	China Tonnage	GDP in USD	Chinese Exports to World
Incidents	Pearson Correlation	1	.506**	.602**	.572**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.000	.000
	N	46	42	46	46
China Tonnage	Pearson Correlation	.506**	1	.892**	.847**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.000	.000
	N	42	42	42	42
GDP in USD	Pearson Correlation	.602**	.892**	1	.992**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	46	42	46	46
Chinese Exports to World	Pearson Correlation	.572**	.847**	.992**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	46	42	46	46

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Chapter 4

Nationalism, Hegemony, and Implications for Chinese Foreign Policy

Introduction

Having briefly analyzed the results of both the nationalism (chapter 2) and hegemony (chapter 3) models, this chapter synthesizes the findings of these models and attempts to draw wider conclusions for Chinese foreign policy. First is the issue of Nationalism: though it is prevalent elsewhere in government propaganda and scholarly surveys of China, this project showed that nationalism is not significantly present in reporting on the South China Sea disputes. After responding to this unusual finding, I further synthesize the findings of the hegemony model and draw conclusions as to the South China Sea's effect on Chinese foreign policy. Ultimately, China's shifting regional hegemony is indicative of changes to the dynamic roles of China and the U.S. in Asia in addition to changing norms in China-ASEAN relations.

Nationalism in China

The literature review of chapter 2 includes numerous authors who have found nationalism to be a highly significant tool of Chinese domestic political influence. My dictionary of nationalistic terms did not appear in high frequency in state media articles on the South China Sea, nor did the amount of nationalistic sentiment statistically correlate with incidents in the South China Sea. At face value, it seems that nationalism is either a) not as involved in Chinese political

power as generally thought or, b) other tools of political influence are being employed on the subject of the South China Sea disputes.

Writing in the early 1980s, Whiting (1983) observes what he claimed is the presence of nationalism in Chinese foreign policy. As starting proof, he cited a speech at the National Party Congress by the Chairman of the Communist Party, Hu Yaobang, shortly after Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening up policies:

“Being patriots, we do not tolerate any encroachment on China's national dignity or interests.... In the thirty-three years since the founding of our People's Republic, we have shown the world by deeds that China never attaches itself to any big power or group of powers, and never yields to pressure from any big power.... Having suffered aggression and oppression for over a century, the Chinese people will never again allow themselves to be humiliated as they were before, nor will they subject other nations to such humiliation.”

Hu Yaobang to the Twelfth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, September 1, 1982

This quotation and the dialogue at the 12th Party Congress in 1982 was perhaps the beginning of what Whiting (1983) called “assertive nationalism.” Unequal treaties, humiliation, and a sense of powerlessness on the international stage defined the Chinese perspective of the 19th and 20th centuries. In many ways, this perspective informs the current state of China's foreign policy. Assertive nationalism's demand that the Chinese experience of the 19th and 20th centuries never be repeated is especially integral to Chinese foreign policy, as it sets strict and forward-thinking parameters for decisions and actions. In 1986, *Foreign Affairs* ran an article entitled “China's Confident Nationalism,” much in line with scholars of the 1980s who saw the manner of China's economic and political opening as nationalistic in tone (Oksenberg, 1986). Whiting says that perhaps the earliest example of assertive nationalism in post-Republican China was the

Chinese People's Volunteers, who joined North Korean forces to fight the United States in the Korean War and numbered over one million. In line with the vision outlined above, the Chinese People's volunteers were tasked with preventing a foreign imperial power, the United States, from establishing a border with China on the Korean Peninsula.

Around the same time as the 12th Party Congress, senior officials were quoted as saying "If Chinese people felt threatened by external forces, the solidarity among the Chinese would be strengthened, and nationalism would be a useful tool for the regime to justify its leadership role" (Liu, 1988). However, policymakers in the following decade cautioned that unrestrained pragmatic or assertive nationalism may not be manageable. Specifically, some cautioned that the liberalization of nationalism would threaten the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) monopoly on power and lead to demands of public input in domestic, but particularly foreign policy (Zhao, 2005).

Still other scholars argue that Chinese nationalism is not a threat to international security and does not indicate an increased risk of conflict between China and its regional neighbors or the United States. They argue that the CCP's control is achieved through a combination of nationalism and high economic performance (Downs and Saunders, 1999).⁹ China observers in the first two decades of the 21st century critique the western focus on Chinese nationalism, saying that the *Chinese National Identity* should instead be studied alongside numerous other factors of domestic and foreign political power (Carlson, 2009).

⁹ For further reading on Nationalism and China's National identity, See He and Guo (2000), Zhao (2004), and Liew and Wang ed., (2004).

The findings of this project are more in line with the latter group of scholars, showing that nationalism is not as prevalent as some might expect it to be, even in news coverage of sensitive and certainly nationalistic topics such as the South China Sea. These conclusions are perhaps indicative of both options a) and b) – that is to say that nationalism is not as involved in Chinese political power as is generally thought *and* that additional factors and tools of political power are being employed in the specific instance of the South China Sea disputes. In the context of foreign policy, the Chinese National Identity is defined by a fervent desire to avoid the humiliations of the past. This is certainly an area for further study, requiring a shift away from the focus on Chinese nationalism to develop better understanding of the Chinese National Identity (see chapter 5).

Media Coverage of the Disputes in China

Though my empirical model found nationalism to not be a significant indicator of the South China Sea disputes (hypothesis one was false), hypothesis two was proven true. The number of articles on the topic of the South China Sea, particularly in the last decade and a half, increased at a far higher rate than the increase in incidents (refer to graph 1 to see total articles per year). This indicates that, while nationalism has been ruled out as a significant factor, media may still play a role in fomenting public support for Chinese actions in the South China Sea and in the foreign policy decision-making process.

“The (Communist) party (of China) has gone even further than censorship, actively using media to mobilize regime support” (Tang 2005, p. 99).

This claim by Tang (2005) is part of a wider literature that attempts to investigate the usage of Chinese media – not necessarily to imbue nationalism in the minds of the general public, but as tools of education and (in some cases) disinformation. Kennedy

(2009) argues along similar lines, saying that strong state control of the education system and media outlets allows it to define the narrative on any topic, and to ensure that the education system includes some form of indoctrination to support the Party, including its foreign policy goals such as increased activity in the South China Sea. Looped footage of American ships test firing missiles in every Beijing subway car, for example, ensures that everyday citizens are aware of a specific perspective of the disputes. An observer of these subway videos may only see this looped footage of perceived American aggression, and wholeheartedly support Chinese island-building and increased territorial claims in the South China Sea.¹⁰

Chinese Regional Hegemony

The hegemony model proved to be a decisive factor and indicator of incidents in the South China Sea, and each indicator of hegemony was statistically significant. Not only does this prove Modelski and Thompson's (1988) dataset and its applicability to rising power, it enables an analysis with the understanding that the regional power structure in Asia is shifting. Chinese power is increasing relative to global American power, meaning that the role of the U.S. in Asia is diminishing as China's role is rising. Furthermore, we can conclude that China's power relative to its regional neighbors is increasing, and that it has surpassed regional rivals in all of the general indicators of regional hegemony.

¹⁰ This anecdote is based on a first-hand experience in Beijing where I saw the described videos over the course of several days in subway cars and spoke briefly with passersby.

In the early 2000s, China's rise was lamented by western commentators as ushering in a new age of conflict. John J. Mearsheimer warned of the "intense security competition that sets in when an aspiring hegemon appears in Eurasia" (Mearsheimer pg. 160, 2006). David Shambaugh's (2005) article entitled: "China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order," is one of the earliest pieces of scholarly work that establishes the discussion of Chinese regional goals. Specifically, Shambaugh notes (and predicts) some of the profound changes to the international system that have occurred to accommodate China's rise or that have been directly changed by China. Since his work, we can of course look to the Beijing-controlled Asia Infrastructure and Development Bank (AIIB), the Silk Road fund, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and numerous other regional projects undertaken by China under the leadership of President Xi Jinping.

Interestingly, these and other initiatives have a strictly regional ambition. That is, China has thus far *not* sought to remake the international system to accommodate its foreign policy goals.¹¹ Instead, it has focused on regional hegemony – a crucial distinction when investigating the Chinese perspective of the South China Sea Disputes. The hegemony model of this project found that Chinese naval tonnage, GDP, and total exports are drastically increasing, and that they are significant at the 5% level of significance as an indicator of incidents in the South China Sea. In the context of these findings and of the South China Sea disputes, the sections that follow will go into greater depth on the subjects of shifting Chinese and American roles in Asia and China's relationship with member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

¹¹ There are certainly examples of Chinese influence throughout Africa and South America. This statement is only meant to highlight the drastic nature of the structural changes to the Asian region that China has undertaken.

Shifting Chinese and American Roles in Asia

At the 2017 South China Sea Conference in Washington, Senator Cory Gardner (R-CO) gave a keynote address, entitled “renewing American leadership in the Asia Pacific.”¹² In his speech to South China Sea experts from around the world, he argued for an increased American presence to counter Chinese expansion in the region. Senator Gardner, like many of those present at the conference, saw the only way to respond to China’s rising regional hegemony to be a reactive increase in America’s presence in Asia – tacitly accepting the possibility of an eventual military conflict between the two powers over freedom of navigation in the South China Sea. Though the recommitment of American resources to the South China Sea region is done in the name of upholding international law, the fact that the United States has not ratified UNCLOS leaves this argument without standing. Instead, it is clear that American interests persist in the region that prohibit a complete withdrawal of American recourses and necessitate shifting roles for the U.S. and China in Asia.

Despite the overwhelming dialogue analyzing a global clash of U.S. and Chinese interests, I will present the opposite argument. In fact, China has shown a remarkable lack of interest in challenging American positions of global leadership, even at a time when the United States has reneged on those commitments with incomparable persistence.¹³ Instead, China is focused on the continuation of domestic economic growth, and the crucial role that international trade plays in maintaining a GDP growth rate north of seven percent. Susan Shirk’s (2007) book described China

¹² The Seventh Annual South China Sea Conference was held at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C. on July 18, 2017

¹³ Such as American decisions to reduce funding to the United Nations, leave the Paris Climate Accords, defund the International Space Station, cancel the Trans-Pacific Trade Partnership, renegotiate NAFTA, and moves to cancel the Iran Nuclear agreement.

as a “fragile superpower” because of the insecurity of its leaders and their absolute focus on domestic security and what they perceive to be China’s national interests. It is clear, however, that in addition to domestic concerns, China seeks regional hegemony and U.S. recognition of its importance in the region. Rosemary Foot (2006, pg. 85) wrote that this accommodation of U.S. global leadership is accompanied by:

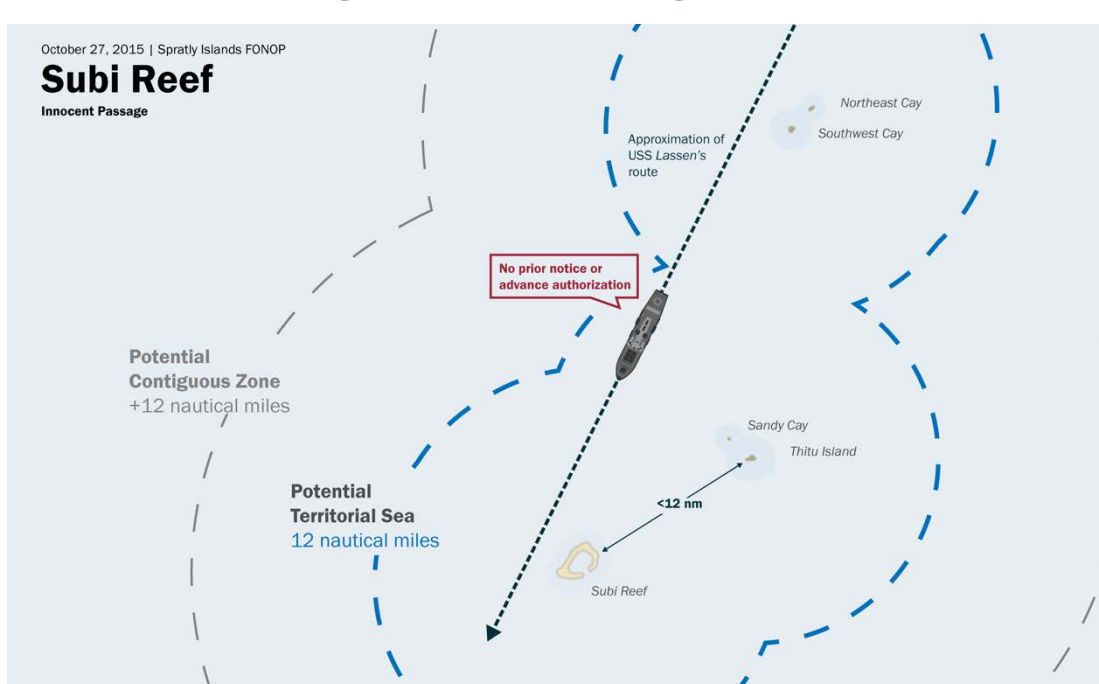
“...policies designed to ensure that, were relations seriously to deteriorate with Washington, China could draw on deepened regional and global ties to thwart any US effort to interrupt its domestic objectives.”

Other authors and foreign policy think tanks have commented on the limited scope of China’s regional ambitions and recommended that the U.S. allow the Chinese to realize their goal of regional dominance. Writing for the Atlantic Council, Wang Jisi (2004) noted that China’s regional definition of “Asia” is primarily confined to East Asia and poses very little threat to American global dominance. More recently, Zhao (2016) published an edited volume that further analyzes a foreign policy that is most accurately characterized by pragmatism – a pragmatism informed by Chinese national interests that have defined China’s interactions with the international community despite steps to adapt to international norms. Economic centrality, Jennifer Lind (2018) argues in *Foreign Affairs*, is being used by China to create economic dominance in East Asia that has already been employed in coercive ways to advance China’s agenda in the region (see the next section on the Belt and Road Initiative).

Based upon this understanding of Chinese goals, it is advisable that the U.S. work with China to establish an agreement on conduct in the South China Sea and the wider East Asian Region. It is unlikely that the U.S. will end freedom of navigation (FON) missions because of the danger this poses to American trade, but it is equally unlikely that China will abandon its footing

in the South China Sea. Figure 5 provides an example of a FON mission from October 2015, in which American warships sailed well within China's claimed 12 nautical mile territorial waters around artificially-built islands. The U.S. argues that according to UNCLOS, these artificial islands do not qualify as territorial land fixtures, and therefore do not create territorial waters for China. It remains important for American freedom of navigation (FON)¹⁴ operations to continue in the interest of uninterrupted trade, but the rhetoric of challenging China's access to its home region or upholding international law is either unhelpful, or untrue. The lack of Chinese ambitions to upend the American international order makes a new understanding of U.S.-China roles in the South China Sea both unique and vastly important to stability in the region.

Figure 5: Freedom of Navigation Oct. 2015



¹⁴ Freedom of Navigation missions by the U.S. Navy are typically simple maneuvers in international waters to show American commitment to keeping those passages open for trade.

China's rising regional hegemony is perhaps best defined by President Xi Jinping's defining foreign policy project: The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI – previously referred to as One Belt One Road). First announced in 2013, the BRI envisions the rehabilitation of the silk road and the revitalization of ports, railroads, highways, and other infrastructure throughout Asia.¹⁵ Predictions of the total investments for the BRI range from \$900 billion to \$8 trillion but remain officially ambiguous. In practice, the BRI is a new Chinese foreign policy that involves the Chinese Government or China-linked financial groups funding thousands of projects with the goal of improving relationships with regional neighbors and improving the infrastructure on which Chinese goods are transported and sold. Some of the BRI's most remarkable projects are outside of East Asia – such as the \$62 billion project to create a super highway from Kashgar (in China's Xinjiang Province) through Pakistan to the major port of Gwadar. For the purposes of exploring China's regional hegemony in East Asia and how the BRI has come to define China's relationship with its East Asian neighbors by overcoming concerns over the South China Sea, it is necessary to focus on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

There are several important things to note about the BRI. First, it is *not* new money that China has allocated from central government expenditures. Instead, it is an aggregation – a repackaging of existing sources of investment funding. The New Silk Road Fund, announced by Xi in 2014, started with a budget of \$40 billion. In 2017, President Xi added an additional \$14.5 billion to the fund, but there is no public record of where the money was invested or how much

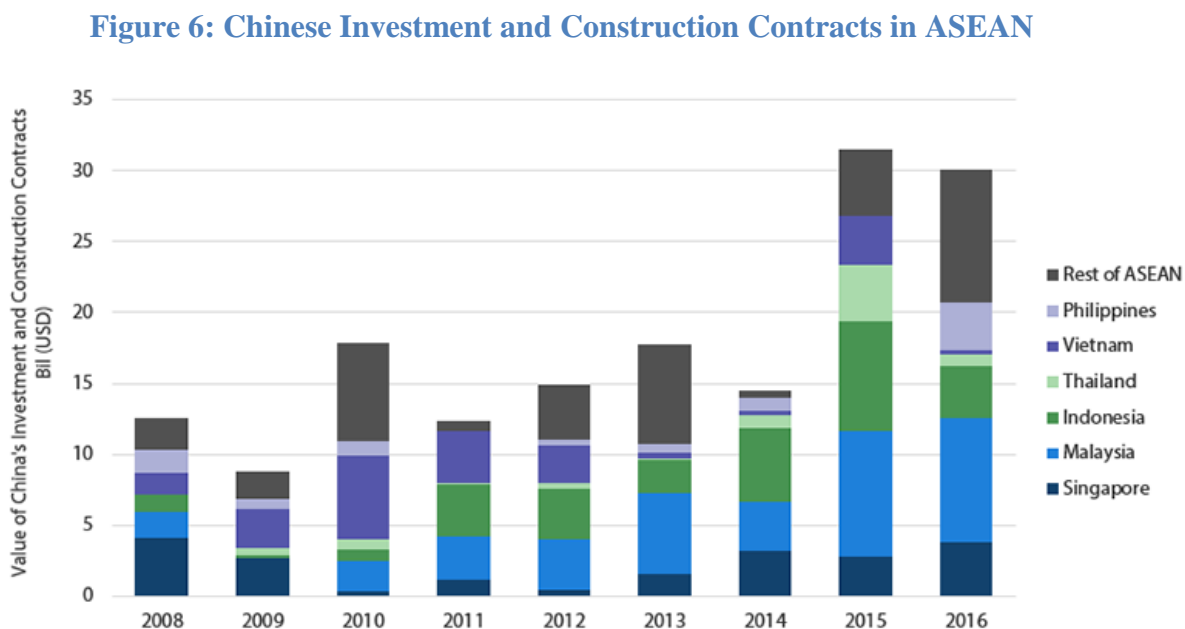
¹⁵ For the most comprehensive map of BRI projects, see the newly-released Reconnecting Asia website from CSIS: <https://reconnectingasia.csis.org/map/>

remains. Also involved in BRI funding is the China Development Bank and the Beijing-based Asia Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB). The China Development Bank's total credit is thought to be around \$900 billion, and the AIIB began with capital of \$100 billion, contributed by 61-member nations and controlled by China's 26% stake in the bank (Hillman, 2018). Many of the projects under the BRI umbrella had already begun before the program's announcement, but the Chinese government's repackaging of foreign development assistance has led to incredible private and foreign involvement, including China's four national banks raising upwards of \$30 billion from private investors in 2017 alone (Wu, 2017).¹⁶

ASEAN member nations have been the recipients of billions of dollars in BRI-related investment. To a surprising degree, these investments have softened (and in many cases, eliminated) long-held opposition on the part of ASEAN states to Chinese expansion and actions in the South China Sea. Thailand and Vietnam, for instance, had formally rejected Chinese claims to the South China Sea and Vietnam had even endeavored to complete island reclamation of its own. At the same time, both countries became involved in the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation framework, signed in 2013 to connect China to the countries along the Mekong river through billions of dollars invested into 45 infrastructure projects (Hiebert, 2017). In the example of Thailand and Vietnam, condemnations and challenges to Chinese actions in the South China Sea have mostly ended with the increased involvement of Chinese investment. Overall, ASEAN's largest trading partner is China, while ASEAN is China's third largest trading partner behind the United States and the European Union. This may change with the recently enacted ASEAN-China

¹⁶ Further information on the various funding sources of the BRI can be found in a document published by Inclusive Development International: <https://www.inclusivedevelopment.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Making-Inroads-China-Infrastructure-Finance-March-2017.pdf>

free trade area and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) – the China backed successor to the now-defunct American Trans-Pacific Trade Partnership (TPP). Figure 6 shows that Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) in ASEAN has risen to roughly \$30 billion each year



Source: American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation, ANZ 2017

All of these investment and cooperation regimes have redefined the South China Sea narrative in the China-ASEAN relationship. What were once the countries most critical of China's land reclamation and militarization of the South China Sea have now become silent on the topic. The international arbitration case brought by the Philippines (explored in Chapter 1) had been part of an ASEAN-wide condemnation of Chinese actions following Chinese military operations that seized Philippines-held islands. At each annual ASEAN Summit, leaders have repeatedly issued communiques on the topic of the South China Sea condemning China's actions on behalf of the entire regional bloc. In 2017, however, these clauses were dropped from a communique that was welcomed by Chinese officials. Though earlier versions of the statement retained condemnation of "land reclamation and militarization," the final release did not contain so much as a reference

to those terms. Several reports cited ASEAN diplomats as having knowledge of Chinese officials pressuring the Philippines (then the chair of ASEAN) to change the language in the communique (Reuters, 2017). This significant shift marks not only the influence of the BRI and China's increased engagement with its Asian neighbors, but also the effectiveness with which this engagement has produced foreign policy developments in China's favor.

As long as ASEAN initiatives, such as the 2015 master plan for ASEAN rail connectivity, the ASEAN agreement on e-commerce, and local projects such as the Kuala Lumpur – Singapore high speed rail project require Chinese investment, opposition to Chinese actions in the South China Sea seems unlikely (Majumdar, 2017). With specific regard to the South China Sea, China's economic assistance to regional stakeholders has left the international community in a position of unsupported intervention. American FON operations were initially begun at the request of the Philippines government and in conjunction with the Philippine Navy. In October of 2016, the Philippines withdrew from joint patrols and FON operations with the United States. With norms shifting in the ASEAN-China relationship, future opposition to Chinese actions in the South China Sea from regional stakeholders cannot be expected.

Chinese Foreign Policy in the South China Sea

As previously discussed, Chinese foreign policy remains primarily defined by domestic concerns. According to Fei-Ling Wang (2005, pg. 669), there are three incentive structures that inform a “risk averse” Chinese foreign policy:

1. *The political preservation of the CCP regime*
2. *China's economic prosperity*
3. *Beijing's pursuit of power and prestige*

The first two of Wang's incentive structures are clearly domestic concerns that can be applied to the South China Sea. The political preservation of the CCP regime requires domestic support that is often attributed to propaganda and misinformation. In the case of the South China Sea, however, informing the public of foreign policy successes and incidents in which the Chinese authorities confronted foreign countries that purportedly threatened China's sovereignty aids the preservation of this structure. The nationalism model showed that reporting on the incidents in the South China Sea increased at a far higher rate than the incidents themselves, indicating that – while nationalistic propaganda was not overtly present in the reporting – domestic support may still be achieved by increasing awareness and interest in Chinese actions in the South China Sea. Economic prosperity, Wang's second incentive structure, is also inextricably linked to the South China Sea. As previously discussed, ASEAN countries represent China's third largest market, and goods sent to the United States and the European Union (first and second largest trade partners, respectively) also require uninterrupted passage through the South China Sea.

The third tenet of Chinese foreign policy, Beijing's pursuit of power and prestige, is certainly more complex and difficult to measure. The hegemony model showed that China's regional power is increasing, its global power is increasing as American power falls, and that China enjoys clear hegemony over all of its regional neighbors. Chinese actions in the South China Sea are certainly part of a demand for greater international recognition, a desire for regional superiority, and the sense that the United States may a) soon be unable or unwilling to fulfill its traditional role of ensuring free and safe passage through the South China Sea or b) China has decided that it cannot and does not want to rely on Washington to remain dominant in the South China Sea. In this more predominant line of thinking, the idea is that China relies on free passage and security in the region too much to risk losing it were relations with the U.S. to significantly deteriorate.

As noted by Li (2014), China's policy in the South China Sea has been surprisingly defined by an approach of legalization. Despite the arbitration brought by the Philippines, China has sought to rationalize and complete its expansion in the South China Sea within the supposed confines of international norms. Though certainly flouting the requirements of those international laws when they do not suit Chinese interests, China remains a signatory of UNCLOS and has sought to employ international norms in its defense. This posture has led commentators such as Herscovitch (2017) of the CATO Institute to conclude that the threats to international trade, the security of claimant nations, the free navigation and flight of American forces, and overall regional security to be very low.

Regarding future Chinese policy toward the South China Sea, it seems most likely that construction of military bases will be completed without interruption and China will then be able to project air and sea power throughout the South China Sea. The most pressing question regarding Chinese policy in the South China Sea is whether an air identification zone will be established, and to what degree other countries will be forced to comply (see Chapter 1). Further steps in Chinese policy will be to measure the effectiveness of the South China Sea protocols (rules of engagement and navigation) with ASEAN and whether such protocols can be enacted between China and the United States.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the implications of both the nationalism and hegemony models. The lack of nationalism in coverage of the South China Sea disputes proved to be quite interesting when compared to its prevalence elsewhere in Chinese political discourse. Though the purpose of

state media is to orient the Chinese public to the government's perspective of the disputes, the large-scale media coverage of the South China Sea indicates that nationalistic terminology is not needed for state media to achieve their goal. Instead, large-scale coverage of the Chinese position has ensured public support of the government's actions and excitement over the supposed anti-imperialist reasons for Chinese expansion.

The hegemony model indicated that Chinese action in the South China Sea is being driven by shifting power dynamics in the Asia-Pacific region. Further analysis has shown the importance of this changing power structure in the shifting relationship between China and the U.S. in addition to China's complex relationship with ASEAN in the context of the South China Sea. The Belt and Road Initiative under the leadership of Chinese President Xi Jinping has initiated a new regional leadership role for China that is based on investment and strategic infrastructure. Ultimately, Chinese policy in the South China Sea does not threaten regional security but represents a stark departure from the status quo of past decades.

Chapter 5

Conclusions: Nationalism, Hegemony, and National Identity

Introduction

Empirical models have concluded that nationalism is not driving Chinese actions in the South China Sea, and that regional hegemony is the most likely indicator of Chinese actions in China's "South Sea." Chapter 4 explored the implications of these findings to wider regional policies and shifting understandings of the role of state media in China. This final chapter will address next steps on the theoretical topics and possible future scenarios for the South China Sea Disputes.

Overall Findings

This project has found that nationalism is not driving the South China Sea disputes, and that state media coverage of the South China Sea is not heavily laden with nationalistic terms. My original coding of South China Sea news coverage was enabled by the definitions of Davidov (2009) and a statistical analysis of Chinese state media articles from 1970 to 2015 that searched for the presence of ten distinct nationalistic words or phrases in Mandarin. Instead, I found that state media reporting on the South China Sea is increasing 14 times faster than the increase in incidents as evidenced by their respective slopes. This finding indicates that state media is being used to raise public awareness of an issue that the government hopes will foment support for the

ruling CCP and ensure that the public consciousness of the disputes is in line with the Chinese government's position. The use of state media platforms for government support is a frequent tool of the Chinese government, and the fact that it persists on the subject of the South China Sea disputes is not surprising. Instead, it is significant that nationalism has been found to be irrelevant to government coverage of the disputes. Both the prevailing foreign policy think tanks and analysts have pegged Chinese nationalism as a key driver of Chinese actions in the South China Sea. Instead, this project has indicated that the assumption of nationalism's presence and importance is misguided, and that the focus of these analyses should instead be a better understanding of the *Chinese national identity*.

On the topic of hegemony, this project has furthered the original work of Modelski and Thompson (1988) by expanding upon the original hegemony coding rules and the regional work of Lemke (2002) by analyzing China's regional hegemony in comparison to the pattern of incidents in the South China Sea over a 45-year period. Ultimately, statistical evidence shows that Chinese actions in the South China Sea are, at least in part, being driven by a sharp rise in Chinese regional hegemony. Alongside this rise in regional hegemony are shifting relationships with the United States and with regional partners in ASEAN who also have claims in the South China Sea. Though U.S.-China dynamics are surely shifting, it is notable that China has decided not to challenge the existing international order as of Spring 2018. In the context of that decision, my results indicate that Chinese actions are being driven by a need to establish regional control and to accompany regional economic dominance through projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative. Taken together, these facets urge Western commentators and policymakers to properly consider Chinese actions in the South China Sea as the aspirations of a regional hegemon.

Next Steps

The most significant next step that has been indicated by my findings is the need to shift academic study and foreign policy analysts from a focus on Chinese nationalism to the pursuit of a better understanding of the implications of China's regional hegemony. In the context of the South China Sea, this project has shown that the Chinese government's artificial construction of nationalism is not overly significant to a better understanding of government actions and the public's support for those policies. These findings point to the conclusions of Carlson (2009), who noted the limitations inherent in the study of nationalism. Instead, Western policymakers and observers require a better understanding of the associated expectations of Chinese regional hegemony and the role of what scholars have labeled Chinese national identity.¹⁷ Though it has been strongly influenced by government propaganda, Chinese national identity is founded in a collective memory of the humiliations¹⁸ of the past and a strong desire to emerge as a respected actor on the international stage (Zhao, 2006, Fitzgerald, 1999). Among the numerous aspects of China's national identity that require further study, particularly regarding the South China Sea, is how the Chinese government will reconcile the expectations of regional hegemony, a desire for non-intervention, and a steadfast commitment to "China's national interests."

A second area of further study is to properly establish the role of international law in the South China Sea. If China remains unwilling to abide by UNCLOS and the U.S. persists as a non-

¹⁷ For a definition and exploration of Chinese National Identity, see Gries et al., 2011

¹⁸ In this context, humiliations refer to the "century of humiliation" and abuse of China by foreign "imperialist" forces and China's subsequent defeats during the Opium Wars with Great Britain, the various interventions of foreign powers on China's trade through the forcing of treaty ports, and the War of Japanese Aggression (World War II), among others. For more information, see Alison A. Kaufman's testimony to the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission.

signatory, existing international law is not an enforceable answer to the disputes as argued in Chapter 1. However, the Chinese government continues to base its arguments on law, representing a possible way forward. Further analysis of the Chinese position and initiatives such as the forthcoming ASEAN-China South China Sea code of conduct are not only relevant to academic study but could indicate the path to a new legalized status quo.

Expectations for the Disputes: Three Scenarios

Escalation of Tensions and Chinese Aggression

The scenario at the forefront of discussion by current foreign policy analysts is that large-scale confrontation is coming in the South China Sea. Rather than confrontation between China and other claimants to territory in the South China Sea, the conflict will arise between China and the U.S. alongside its allies. The conflict will occur, commentators argue, due to the incompatibility of China's vision for regional hegemony in Asia and the international legal order led by the United States and Europe (Lindt, 2018). As the *Economist* wrote: "The country's (China's) status among its neighbors is not keeping up with its growing powers" (Economist, 2017).

Another factor that has led observers to point to this scenario is Xi Jinping's recent rise to a potentially limitless presidential term. At a February meeting, the Chinese Communist Party approved an amendment to the constitution that removed term limits on the President. Though the fact that the Standing Committee did not appoint a clear successor at last year's National Party Congress indicated Xi's plans to stay in power, the move is both earlier than expected and unusual. Xi could have backed away from the official role of President but continued to run the party and government as a de-facto leader, like his predecessor Deng Xiaoping. Additionally, he pursued the

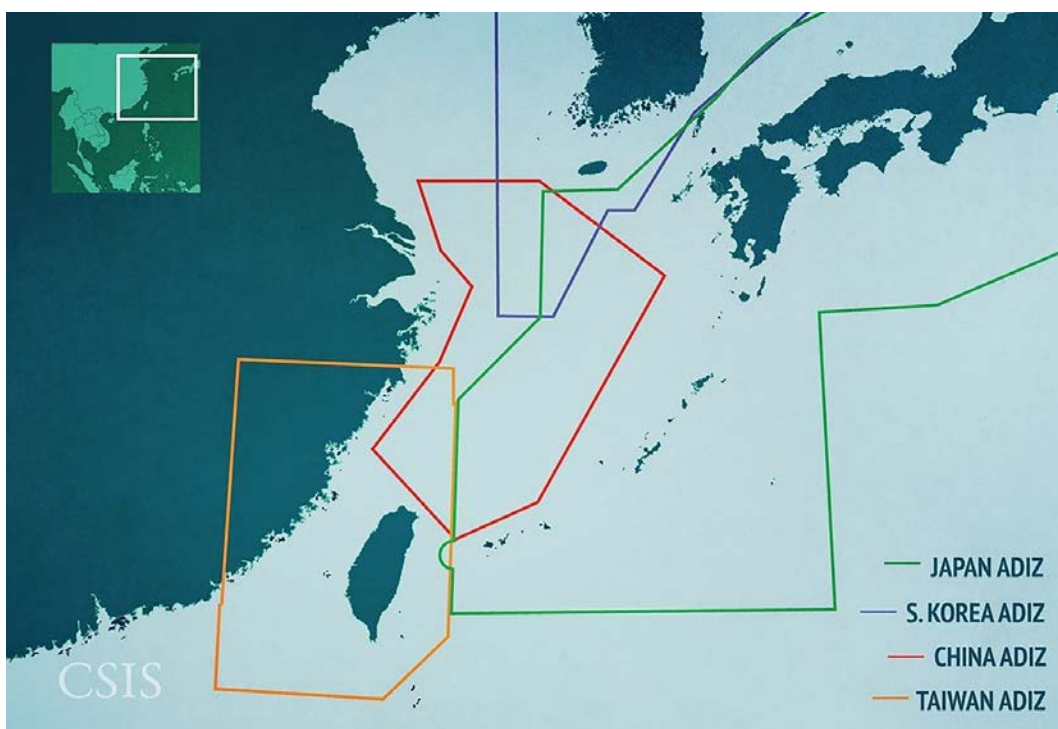
constitutional amendment at the end of his first term and could have easily waited until well into his second. These and other nuances of the decision have renewed the fears of American commentators that this future of escalation is possible due to the clash of Xi's perceived vision of China as a leader in the international community with the current U.S.-led international norms (Buckley and Lee Myers, 2018).

Specifically, there are certain steps that China could take that would immediately escalate the situation beyond the capability of current efforts to balance U.S.-China hegemony in the region (Tourangbam, 2017). As island reclamation is completed and Chinese military bases in the South China Sea become active, the possibility of a Chinese reaction to American freedom of navigation operations will significantly increase. A turning point will come if, after the activation of Chinese military outposts on reclaimed islands, Beijing institutes air, sea, or submarine identification zones in the South China Sea. While ASEAN may accept some of those aspects of Chinese control (as evidenced by the recently agreed ASEAN-China South China Sea code of conduct), the U.S., South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and the E.U. will surely not respond to Chinese demands for identification.

The enforcement of identification zones has the potential to encourage conflict in the South China Sea as the U.S., South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and the E.U. would likely refuse to comply. If China chose to strongly enforce its identification zones, tensions would certainly escalate to conflict. The most likely avenue to such conflict is the already in-discussion submarine identification zone for the South China Sea, which the Chinese will soon have the infrastructure to properly enforce and with which the United States would certainly not comply. Such an identification zone would require American nuclear (and other) submarines to surface while in the South China Sea and remain under the observation of the Chinese navy. However, an example of

how this may not lead to conflict can be found in China's 2013 declaration of an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea (see figure 7). The U.S. military received only an hour's notice and flew two B-52 bombers through the zone without informing China two days later. The U.S. government continues to fly military aircraft through the zone without consulting China but complies with Chinese identification requirements for all civilian aircraft passing through the zone (CSIS, 2017).

Figure 7: East China Sea ADIZs



Status Quo

A second scenario is that tensions will remain relatively high, but that both the international legal framework led by the United States and the Chinese aspiration for regional control will continue to simultaneously exist in Asia. If Chinese military installations become operational

without a significant change in Chinese policy, and American freedom of navigation operations continue in the South China Sea, the status quo will most likely remain stable. Such a scenario would require China to reduce the pace of its regional military expansion and convince the United States that the Belt and Road Initiative is not harmful to the regional order or the recipient countries.

Under the leadership of Xi Jinping, China's military has completed and embarked upon significant changes by increasing funding and announcing new projects. Under Xi's leadership of the Military, China has invested heavily in the creation of a blue water navy and significant space presence while also moving to build the foundations of a global military force (Perlez, 2018). China established its first foreign military base in Djibouti in 2017. The naval base is located just a few miles away from the sprawling American Camp Lemonnier, where 4,000 navy and marine personnel are based and regarded as one of the most important bases for drone operations (Jacobs and Perlez, 2017). As China continues to increase its investment and focus on military modernization, it is coming into more frequent contact with American global dominance, particularly in the aforementioned naval and space areas of military confrontation. It would be difficult for China to adjust this trajectory, and highly unlikely that they would do so in order to appease the U.S., but it also remains likely that China can continue to pursue this course of action for some time before serious confrontations with the U.S. are a concern for either country.

A second area of focus for the maintenance of the status quo is for China to convince the U.S. that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is not detrimental to U.S. allies or U.S. interests. American policymakers are highly skeptical of Chinese motives for the large investments of the BRI, particularly given its veiled use of funding sources as described in chapter 4. The U.S.-China Security and Review Commission, a research commission of the U.S. Senate, has held several hearings on the topic, which seemingly cement the American view of the BRI as Chinese economic

weight that the U.S. cannot hope to match. For the U.S., this becomes a perceived security threat when it leads to traditional partners, such as Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, and other Southeast Asian countries not only turning to China for infrastructure investment, but also for the purchase of weapons, warships, and increased trade (Cleveland and Stivers, 2017).

The American abandonment of the Trans-Pacific Trade Partnership (TPP) furthered the Chinese goal of increased economic integration in Asia by not only removing the threat of U.S. trade, but also eliminating human rights and safety regulations that had been brought to the trade negotiation table by the Americans. Chinese efforts have intensified to complete the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)¹⁹. Seen as an alternative to the American-led TPP, RCEP is a freer trade agreement between Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, India, China, and ASEAN. Significantly, it does not include the U.S. Though recent American policies have created China's ideal reality in the Asian economic space and made it possible for the status quo to be maintained, mounting American concerns will need to be waylaid in order to maintain the status quo.

Recognition of Chinese Regional Hegemony, New Regime in Asia

A third scenario for Asia is an abrupt recognition of Chinese regional hegemony by the international community, particularly the United States, and the establishment of a new China-based economic and security regime in Asia. The empirical and analytical findings of this project have indicated that the future course of the disputes will be defined by the Chinese position, and

¹⁹ For more information on RCEP, see ASEAN.org

this scenario purports a situation in which the U.S. and other countries positively respond to China's demands in the region. ASEAN's acceptance of Chinese demands at recent summits and on the part of individual member countries indicates that regional opposition to Chinese actions is waning. Soon, China may stop relying on historical claims to justify island building and instead present an argument of regional security and hegemony. This third scenario would emerge if the U.S. and ASEAN endeavored to fully understand *and* recognize the Chinese perspective of the disputes and base a legalized status quo on some degree of acquiescence to Chinese regional hegemony.

This acquiescence would require the international community to recognize Chinese dominance in the region and to relinquish a great deal of control to China regarding maritime trade and the regional economic order. This scenario may bring the greatest level of peace, but it comes at the price of the existing international legal order. Obstacles include the opportunity for Chinese aggression to go unchallenged, the difficulty South Korea and Japan would have in accepting such a regime for Asia, and American reluctance to end Freedom of Navigation missions to instead allow China to enforce its own maritime vision for the South China Sea.

As mentioned in the first scenario, the United States is unlikely to accept demands for identification of its military assets to China, and American allies such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore are likely to also oppose such acquiescence. American military bases, particularly in the Philippines and Singapore, would also require some sort of downsizing or observation by Chinese forces, which is also unlikely. Moves in this direction can be seen however, as American allies pivot towards China and limit American options for continued force projection in the region. The Philippines, for instance, has come under increasing pressure from China to distance itself from the U.S. and cease sovereignty claims, economic exploration, and security

activities in regions of the West Philippines Sea and the wider South China Sea. Though the U.S. continues to operate several large military installations in the country, such as the large naval base at Subi Reef, President Duterte has increasingly bowed to Chinese demands ranging from cancelling a planned visit to the Pag-asa island in the West Philippines Sea to prohibiting further off-shore oil exploration (Cook, 2018). While this project argues for a better understanding of the Chinese perspective, it is clear that the space between understanding and this scenario of acquiescence remains large.

Conclusion

The Study of Chinese actions in the South China Sea requires further work on the nature of Chinese regional hegemony and the policies of the Chinese government that continue to pursue a new regional order in Asia. The future of the South China Sea disputes is highly dependent upon the actions of China, and the three scenarios discussed here exemplify the varied possibilities but is by no means exhaustive. The actions and positions of ASEAN and other international organizations will also continue to be relevant to altering the existing regime in Asia, as one of the greatest obstacles is the reconciliation of existing international organizations with China's vision for the region. Ultimately, this project has improved the current discourse on the South China Sea by exemplifying the problems inherent in the study of Chinese nationalism and instead pointing to a narrative of Chinese regional hegemony. To reach a better understanding of the Chinese perspective and Chinese motivations in the disputes, it continues to be important to explore China's interpretation of regional hegemony and the influence of Chinese national identity on foreign policymaking. I have shown that the driving force of

China's increased action and presence in the South China Sea does not appear to be nationalism and exhibited strong evidence that regional hegemony has not only been a decisive factor in deciding Chinese policy, but will continue to be a one of the most important considerations for the region.

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Chapter Five

“The Travails of a Regional Hegemon: China’s Battle for Influence in Its Region.” 2017. *The Economist*.

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Benjamin D. Black

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Academic Vita

Education

Master of International Affairs

Spring 2018

Penn State School of International Affairs

Journal of Law and International Affairs: Regular Contributor 2017-2018

Relevant Coursework:

American Foreign Policy, Global Cultures and Leadership, Economics, Econometrics, Legal Frameworks of International Affairs, Current Policy Challenges Colloquium, Corporate Social Responsibility Legal Frameworks

Bachelor of Arts in Asian Studies

Spring 2018

Dual Major in International Politics

The Pennsylvania State University

Minor in History; Minor in Chinese Language

Student Marshall, Paterno Fellow, Schreyer Honors Scholar, Janssen Award in Asian Studies, FLAS Fellow

Relevant Coursework:

Chinese Government & Politics, International Politics, Governance & Politics of South Asia, Asian Studies, Chinese Language, Democratization in Asia, East Asian Politics, 20th Century Chinese History, State Making & State Death

Research Focus: Chinese media portrayal of the South China Sea Disputes

Thesis Director: Dr. Gretchen Casper

Thesis Project: Incidents in the South China Sea: Exploring the Chinese Perspective of the Disputes

This paper was presented at the Midwestern Political Science Association Conference – Chicago April 2018

Dalian University of Technology: Dalian City, Liaoning Province, China

Study Abroad Summer 2015

Courses in the Chinese Economy, Government, Politics, and the Chinese Language

Experience

US-ASEAN Business Council, Intern

May 2017 – August 2017

- Interned at The Council, which connects large U.S. corporations such as Coca-Cola, Apple, Conoco Philips (over 150 companies in all) to governments and regulators in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)
- Wrote and researched an “ASEAN Sense of Business” report for top executives and U.S. administration officials
- Compiled and wrote sections of a whitepaper of policy proposals for an ASEAN Economic Ministers summit July 2017
- Contributed to business missions in Bangkok and Jakarta, writing meeting scripts for consultations with the Prime Minister and each of his ministries.

The Penn State International Affairs and Debate Association, President (2016-2017)

2013 – 2018

- Voting member of the Executive Board, as well as various leadership roles and organizational opportunities
- Appointed 5 chair positions to cover tasks and initiatives not covered by existing officers
- Oversaw an annual budget of \$45,000, increasing projected year over year income by \$18,000
- Increased club membership and meeting attendance from roughly 40 to 65

Essence of Joy, President (May 2016-Present)

2013 - 2018

- An African and African-American choir in the PSU School of Music
- Coordinated fundraising and logistical efforts for a 14-day performance tour of Quebec
- Took responsibility for choir members while travelling and met weekly with the director to assess issues and establish logistical understandings
- Treasurer, responsible for acquiring travel funds and managing club and choir finances (**May 2014 – 2016**)

Research Assistant for Dr. Vineeta Yadav**Spring 2018 - Present**

- Communicated with dozens of trade associations in India to collate the contact information of regional and national trade association members.
- Initiated part of a larger project that will eventually involve a survey to determine the lobbying patterns in India at the regional level.

Research Assistant for Amanda Fidalgo**Fall 2016 - 2017**

- Coded results of provincial-level elections in various countries as a measure of democracy
- Demonstrated advanced use of Excel formulas and organization to produce comprehensive datasets from a code book

Resident Assistant – 3rd Year Senior Resident Assistant in Nittany Apartments**2014 – 2017**

- Utilized effective communication and organizational skills to help foster community of diverse scholars
- Led weekly staff meetings, coordinating other Resident Assistants and staff members
- Managed a small budget, planned extensive events, and coordinated jointly-run events
- Interviewed high-level staff applicants, including high-level directors of Penn State's Residence Life Office

Funded Research in Beijing, China**Summer 2016**

- Received funding from the Penn State College of the Liberal Arts and Schreyer Honors College to travel to Beijing
- Attended a conference at Renmin University on Environmental History, where I met several legal scholars and Chinese Historians with relevant knowledge and willingness to speak on the South China Sea
- Spent time in Beijing University Libraries and local bookstores to record the availability and contents of South China Sea-related material

Other Research Assistantships

- Dr. Douglas Lemke: Independently research the existence of autonomous political entities, or defacto states, with a focus on Burma Spring 2014 – Spring 2016
- Dr. Suzanna Lynn: Collected responses regarding tone and persuasive mode of New York Times articles pertaining to the U.S. economy from 1900 to the present Fall 2014 – Fall 2015

Activities**Pennsylvania United Nations Conferences, Secretary General and other Positions****2014 – 2017**

- Led these premier annual crisis simulation conferences: one for College Students and one for High School Students
- Collegiate Conference attended by 130 college students from U.S. and Canadian Universities as well as a delegation from the Turkish Air Force Academy, High School attended by 200 regional students
- Appointed and coordinated an organizing committee of 10 people and a staff of 60
- Oversaw a budget of roughly \$5,000 and produced a 120% profit margin

Paterno Fellows Student Advisory Council**2015 - 2018**

- Collaborated with other Paterno Fellows to discuss issues relevant to the program with Director, Dr. Catherine Wanner
- Attend Alumni dinners and fundraising events for the Paterno Fellows Program and the College of the Liberal Arts

Co-Chair, Collegiate Laws of Essay Contest**2015 - 2017**

- Organized a collegiate essay contest within the College of the Liberal Arts and Paterno Fellows Program. Writers address an ethics issue and can choose from a set of topics (determined by myself) and are then scored by a faculty panel.

Skills**Language**

- Mandarin Chinese: Intermediate level coursework
- Recipient of 2017-2018 Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship from the U.S. Dept. of Education

Computer Programs

- Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Adobe Photoshop, Pixelmator, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Mechanical Turk, SPSS