



# China's "Maritime Defense Sphere"

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**China's Strategy of Asserting Non-Military Power  
to Consolidate Control and Manage Regional Relations**

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**China Maritime Studies Institute**

United States Naval War College . Newport . Rhode Island

海

**Prof. Peter Dutton**

CCTV NEWS



Hu Zongxian, the Zhejiang governor of Ming Dynasty, placed Diaoyu Islands and surrounding islets within China's maritime defense system.

**Hong Lei**  
Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman

IAEA and Iran fail to reach agreement after about 7 hours of nuclear talks

China says Diaoyu Islands are part of its territory since Ming Dynasty in 1403

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It demonstrated that these islands were at least within China's maritime defense sphere since the Ming Dynasty.

**Hong Lei**  
Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman

Violence erupts in demonstration against Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt

# China's Maritime Defense Sphere

First public use of the term by Chinese government ... though the concept is well developed:

“...[I]t is the overlaying area of **China's national sovereignty, an important strategic protective screen, and an energy source base.**” *Zhongguo Junshi Kexue*, February 1, 2007

“China's sea area is the initial **strategic barrier for homeland security**...a channel and **strategic pivot** for the country to move outward...[and] **a treasure trove** of the strategic resources necessary for the country's survival and development.”

Major General Peng Guangqian, *China Maritime Study* #7 (2010)

“[The] need to safeguard **national sovereignty** and **territorial integrity** and to protect the sustainable development of **China's economy** have required China to enhance its seapower.”

Shi Xiaoqin, *Twenty-First Century Seapower* (2012)

“National maritime security...encompasses the security of the maritime area under China's **jurisdiction**, security of the **resource environment**, security of maritime **trade and shipping** fleets, and security of marine resources and prospecting.”

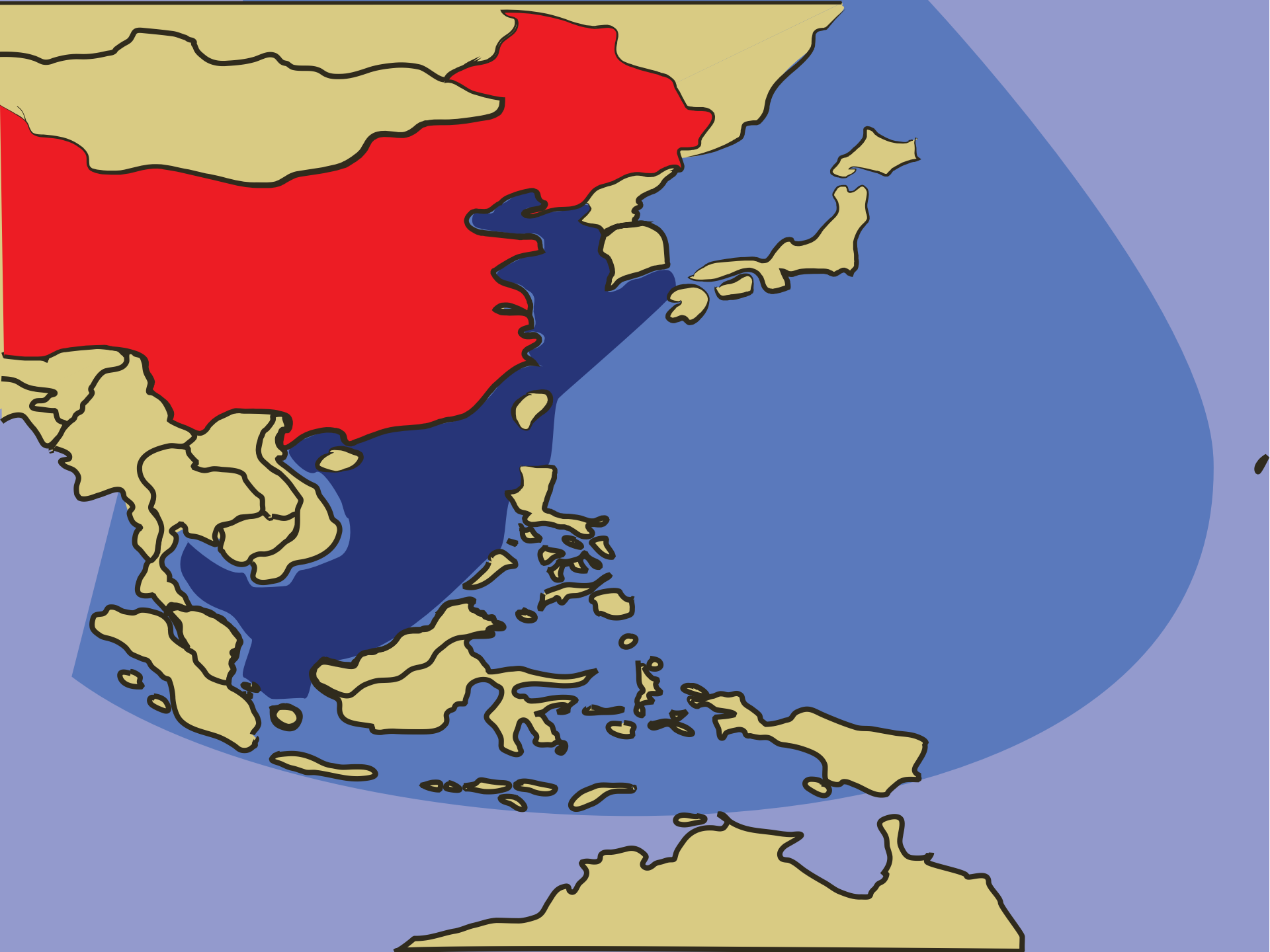
Senior Captain Ren Xiaofeng, *Twenty-First Century Seapower* (2012)

**What?**



## East Asia

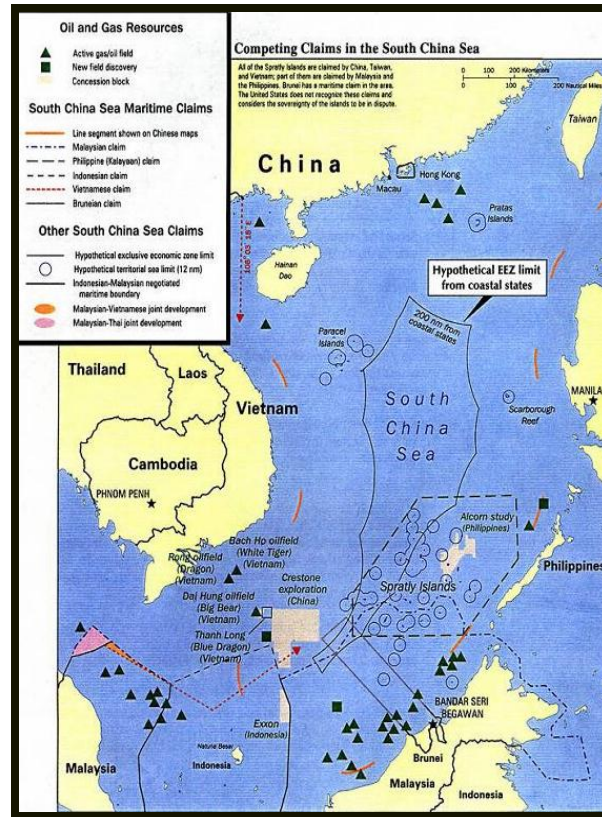
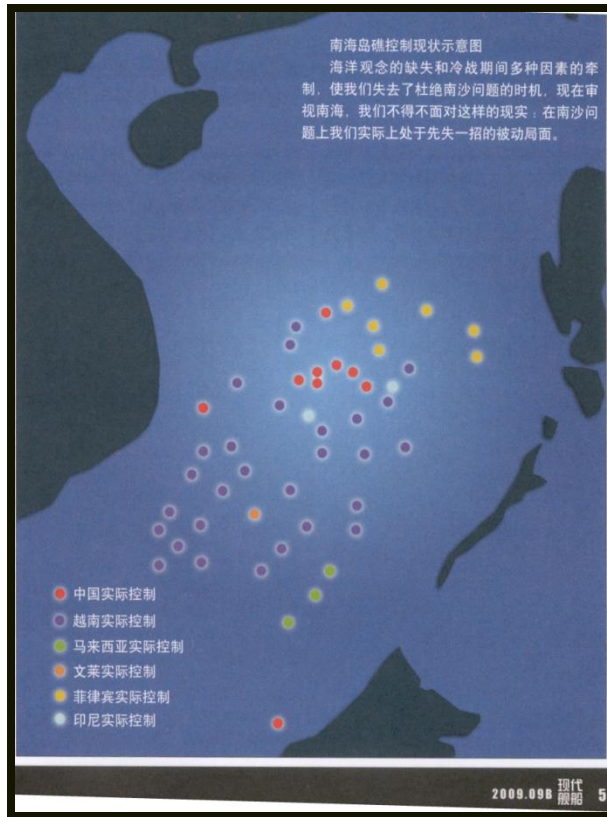




**Why?**



# THREE DISPUTES AND THREE OBJECTIVES



**SOVEREIGNTY**  
**FOR CREDIBILITY AND SECURITY**

**JURISDICTION**  
**FOR RESOURCES AND SECURITY**

**CONTROL**  
**FOR SECURITY AND CREDIBILITY**



# China's Real Maritime Paradox

STRATFOR..."The Paradox of China's Naval Strategy" by Rodger Baker and Zhixing Zhang

"The South China Sea ... is at the center of Beijing's foreign policy dilemma: how to assert its historic maritime claims while maintaining the non-confrontational foreign policy established by former leader Deng Xiaoping in 1980."

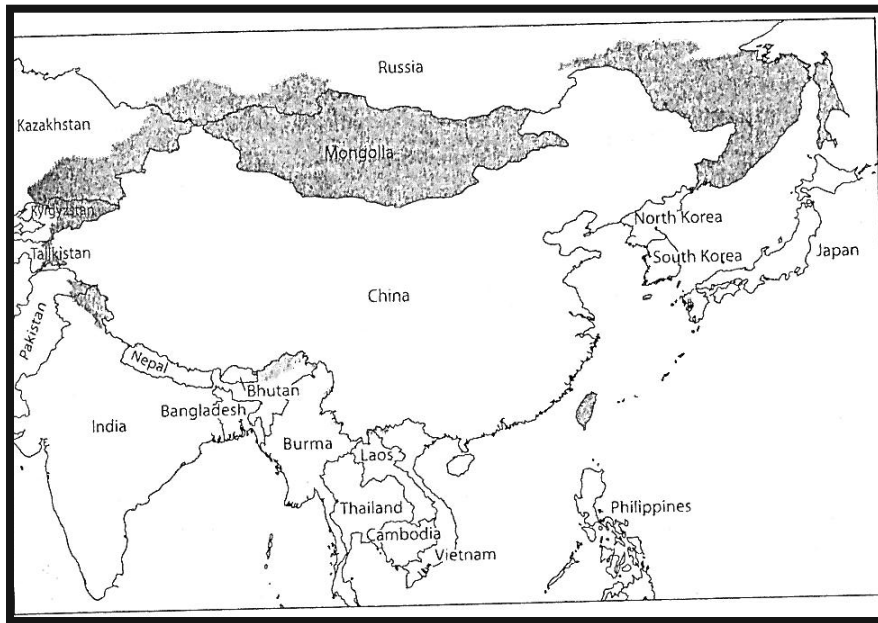
Three Disputes and Three Objectives..

China has three regional objectives that are incompatible. Two are "zero sum," focused on Chinese national self interest at the expense of its neighbors—enhancing its national security by consolidating sovereignty over the islands and enhancing its resource security by establishing Chinese jurisdiction over the waters of the East and South China Seas. These exist in contradiction to China's third objective, which is to increase its influence within the East Asian regional political system.

China's real dilemma is how to devise policies and strategies that meet *all three regional objectives [plus maintain domestic stability]*.

This is the real paradox of China's regional behavior...

Recent behaviors suggest China has prioritized objectives 1 and 2 over 3.



# STRONG BORDERS SECURE NATION

COOPERATION AND CONFLICT IN  
CHINA'S TERRITORIAL DISPUTES

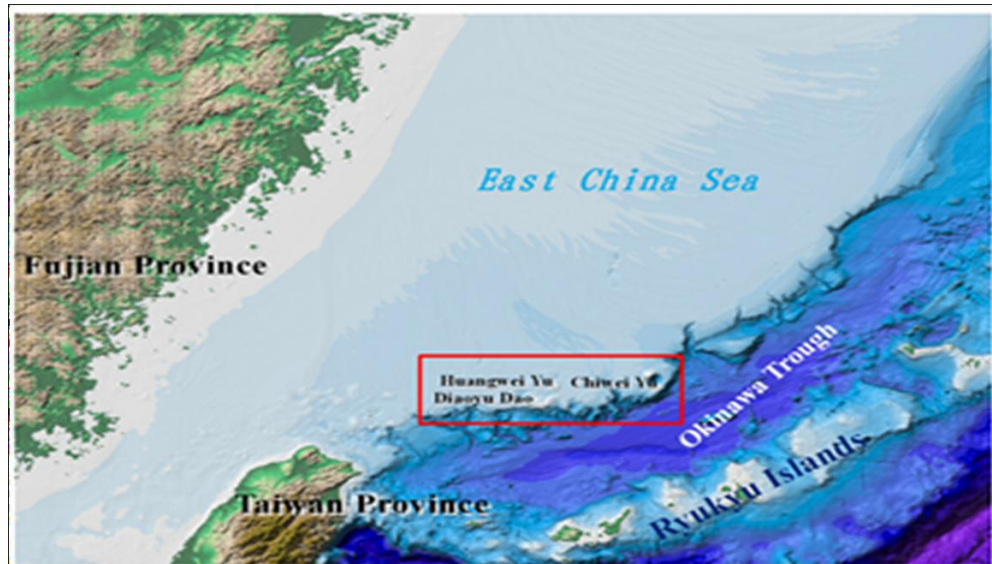


**M. TAYLOR FRAVEL**

Continental borders, Continental security strategies



# KEY MARITIME DISPUTES



**Wei Wen (维稳) Wei Quan (维权)**

**My assessment:**

**China's regional maritime strategy involves using (mostly) non-military instruments of state power to apply constant pressure against other regional states while managing escalation, seizing opportunities to make gains, and incentivizing cooperation on Chinese terms.**

**Where?**





**Beijing is rejecting institutionalization of resource and security disputes and is taking advantage of an opportunity created by others to leverage state and non-state power to achieve gains.**



**Beijing has used maritime disputes to serve domestic stability purposes and has demonstrated willingness to operate across the region simultaneously.**

**But what about China's naval  
patrols, coordination between  
naval and civilian maritime efforts,  
and establishment of  
Sansha garrison?**

Zhao Shengnan and Zhang Yunbi, “China Pledges to Protect Maritime Sovereignty,” *Zhongguo Ribao (China Daily)*, June 29, 2012.

“Asked to comment on **Vietnamese overflights in the skies above Sansha** recently, [Defense Ministry Spokesman] Geng [Yansheng] said ... Beijing will ‘resolutely oppose any military provocation. ... China’s armed forces have the resolution and will to safeguard China’s territorial sovereignty, sea rights and interests, Geng said.”

Gong Juanhua and Zhou Jianyuan, “China’s Restraint Clear to All,” *Zhongguo Ribao, (China Daily)*, June 1, 2012

“It’s true that China will be especially cautious about using military force to resolve the [South China Sea] disputes. But using military force to **defend its territory** does not mean it is abandoning its peaceful rise or pursuing hegemony in the region, defense is not offensive.”

**China’s active defense strategy allows it to apply non-military pressure and then to act in “self-defense” if others respond militarily. This is a key component of the strategy’s success. It puts other regional states in a bind...to be non-assertive is to eventually succumb to Chinese non-military pressure. To be assertive is to invite escalation that they are ill-equipped to control and which US policy seems to disfavor.**



**So What?**

- ◆ Recent FM statement is the first open discussion of China's 'maritime defense sphere,' but the **strategic concept** is well understood and has aspects of security, resources, and politics.
- ◆ China's **strategy** involves continuous pressure by non-military actors, taking advantage of opportunities created by others, creating leverage, and keeping military power an implied threat.
- ◆ This enables China to remain on the strategic offensive.
- ◆ China's actions suggest its current **policy** prioritizes security and resources over regional leadership.
- ◆ Simultaneous ECS and SCS confrontation is new. Given China's 'window of opportunity' more of this should be expected.
- ◆ A key question is whether China's actions amount to an orchestrated **campaign** to create pressure on regional rivals or whether ministries and agencies are independent actors?