

# Preparing for the Ocean Century: China's Changing Political Institutions for Ocean Governance and Maritime Development

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*This article uses Chinese-language resources to discuss the development of China's comprehensive ocean development strategy and the formation of civilian institutions to govern oceans as China prepares for the ocean century. The article argues that while China does have nationalistic aspirations to possess state-of-the-art naval forces and science and technology abilities, China's ocean focus is also greatly motivated by economic and resource interests, and the security need to protect those interests. The article begins by discussing China's ocean economic interests, and then turns to explaining how China's ocean development strategy now goes beyond its interests in economic development toward a more comprehensive national ocean strategy, even though ocean economic development is still very important to the state. The article then traces the development of China's ocean development strategy and the evolution of the political institutions that govern China's ocean policy. Finally, the article concludes with a discussion of the implications of China's ocean strategy, with special attention being paid to policy options for the United States, likely the country with the greatest potential for maritime conflict with China in the 21st century.*

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For China, the 21st century is the ocean century; the ocean is “the 21st century hope.” It is no secret that China desires to become a great sea power. The state is working to increase its strength along economic, military, and scientific and technological fronts. As one Chinese official stated, “the day that China develops into a global ocean power is inevitably the day that the Chinese nation will have made its mighty comeback!” (Z. G. Gao, 2007).<sup>1</sup>

In recent years, China has been formulating a comprehensive national ocean development strategy. Why is China pursuing such a strategy—economic interests; global prestige and status; or darker, more worrisome aims such as naval domination? What is the history of this strategy, and what shape does it take? How will the new Xi-Li Administration provide opportunities and challenges with regard to global ocean governance?

This article uses Chinese-language resources to discuss the development of China’s comprehensive ocean development strategy and the formation of civilian institutions to govern oceans as China prepares for the ocean century. The article argues that while China does have nationalistic aspirations to possess state-of-the-art naval forces and science and technology abilities, China’s ocean focus is also greatly motivated by economic and resource interests, and the security need to protect those interests. Resource insecurity underlies the maritime conflicts in the East China Sea and South China Sea, even as these interests intersect with issues of China’s national pride and memory. While China’s maritime development policies provide some challenges for other countries, opportunities for cooperation on ocean matters also exist.

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<sup>1</sup>“中國發展成爲世界海洋強國之日，必將是中華民族偉大復興之時！”

now goes beyond its interests in economic development toward a more comprehensive national ocean strategy, even though ocean economic development is still very important to the state. The article then traces the development of China's ocean development strategy and the evolution of the political institutions that govern China's ocean policy. Finally, the article concludes with a discussion of the implications of China's ocean strategy, with special attention being paid to policy options for the United States, likely the country with the greatest potential for maritime conflict with China in the 21st century.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This article draws on insights from constructivism to conduct a discursive analysis of Chinese-language sources. Examining Chinese-language materials captures what the Chinese are saying to *themselves* as these materials are meant for a Chinese audience. The constructivist theorist Friedrich Kratochwil explained this rationale. Kratochwil wrote, "Meaningful action is created by placing an action within an intersubjectively understood context, even if such imputations are problematic or even 'wrong' in terms of their predictive capacity. To have 'explained' an action often means to have made intelligible the goals for which it was undertaken" (Kratochwil, 1991).

Chinese-language materials not only reflect the thinking of Chinese on these issues, but they also contribute to the construction of Chinese views or identity through an intersubjective process. The constructivist scholar Nicholas Onuf argued that a speaker does not just state something, but that the speaker also "brings about something in the world" because of the effect that the speaker has on the hearer (Onuf, 1989). Therefore, he said, "when assertive speech acts are successful (their reception confirmed, with normativity attaching), they produce rules, however fragile their constitution and tenuous their normativity." With increased acceptance of the rule, its "constitution becomes institution."

## Defending Economic Interests

China's government policies and academic writing portray the ocean as a "cache of rich resources" (蘊藏著豐富的資源). China's ocean area—both territorial waters and its exclusive economic zone (EEZ)—is sometimes referred to as China's "blue national territory" (藍色國土) by Chinese writing on the matter, and the marine economy as the "blue economy" (藍色經濟).

As the influential theorist Alfred Thayer Mahan argued, safeguarding economic interests is at the heart of any country's pursuit of sea power (Mahan, 1897). In Mahan's thinking, a country's economic growth depended on the ocean as a vector for international trade, and thus sea lines of communication need to be protected by a strong navy. The ability of a nation to possess a powerful navy in turn depended on the country's economic strength. Mahan saw naval power as a *part* of overall maritime power; not *defining* it (Cole, 2013).

Protecting marine economic interests is an overriding consideration in the development of China's sea power. As total factor productivity gains from China's economic reforms have begun to wane, and gross domestic product (GDP) growth has slowed, China views developing the marine economy as a way to boost economic growth in lieu of enacting more difficult economic reforms. The ocean is also a new source of inputs to drive the economy.

And China's ocean economy has certainly been flourishing. China's Ocean Economy Accounting System was launched in 2006, with the aim of improving the quality of ocean-related statistics (W. L. Song, He, & McIlgorm, 2013; Zhao, Hynes, & He, 2014). The new system created a measurement of "gross ocean product" (GOP) and standardized it with GDP, enabling comparisons between the two. In 2013, China's ocean economy, or GOP, reached RMB 5.413 trillion (\$876 billion), amounting to 9.5 percent of China's GDP (SOA, 2014). Ocean-related economic output increased from 3 percent of overall GDP in the 1980s to 5 percent in the year 2000 (Guan & Wang, 2009). China's ocean economy is expected to account for 30 percent of GDP by 2050 according to some

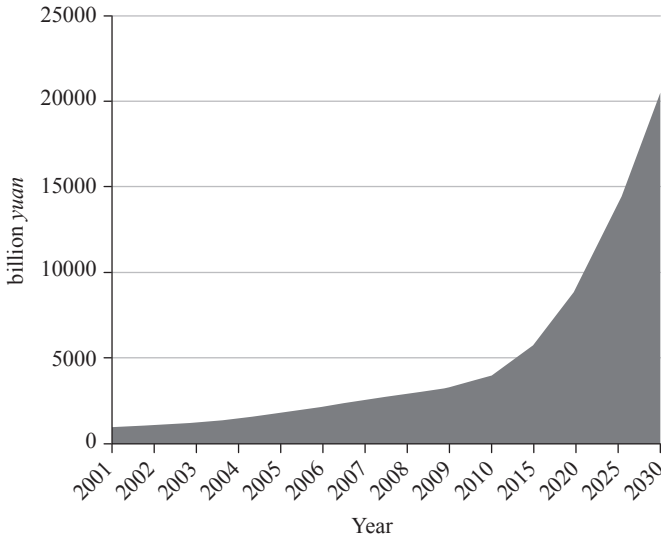


Figure 1. China's Ocean GDP ("gross ocean product") (Yan, Fang, & Gao, 2013).

Chinese analysts (see Figure 1) (Yan, Fang, & Gao, 2013). Growth of the ocean economy often outpaces overall economic growth. While the ocean economy only grew by 7.6 percent from 2012 to 2013, during the Eighth Five-year Plan, ocean-related growth averaged 16 percent every year, far beyond the average 10 percent national rate of growth. In 2011, China's marine economy employed 34.22 million people in 12 sectors (see Figure 2), growing from 21.08 million in 2001 (SOA, 2013c). Coastal provinces have launched their own ocean economic development programs (see Figure 3) and are quite competitive with each other, prioritizing high value-added, heavy marine industries over primary marine sectors, often at the expense of marine environmental protection efforts (Ding, Ge, & Casey, 2014). China's three large ocean regions account for about 88 percent of the ocean economy, with the Bohai taking the largest share at about a third of the ocean economy (see Figure 4).

At the same time, some of China's ocean-related sectors have faced challenges, for example the shipbuilding industry. China overtook South Korea in 2010 to become the world's largest shipbuilder. However, heavy

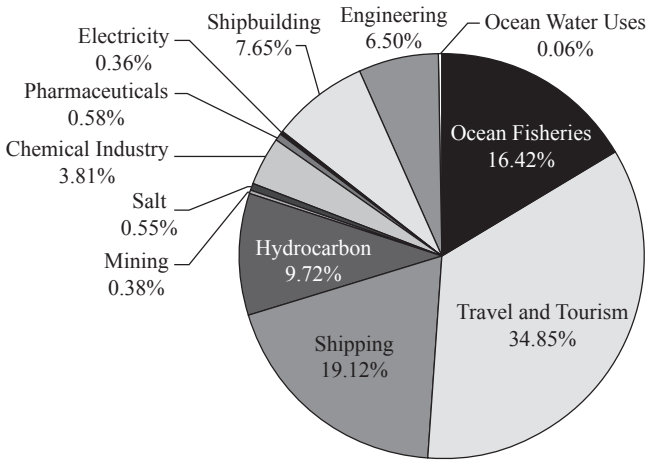


Figure 2. China's ocean economy by sector (Yan, Fang, & Gao, 2013).

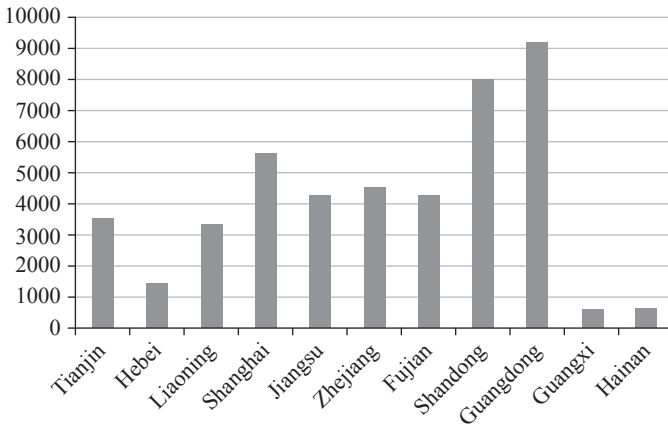
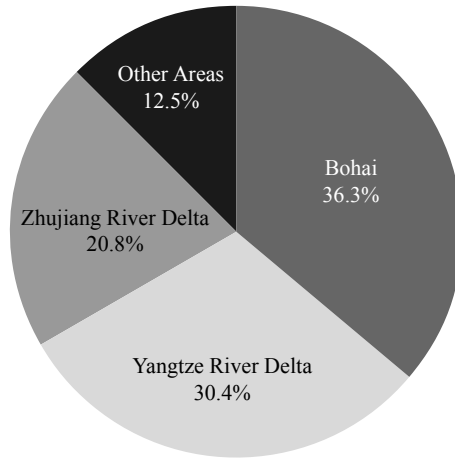


Figure 3. Marine economy by coastal province in 2011, in 100 million yuan (SOA, 2013c).

investment and state subsidies to the industry followed by falling global demand led to overcapacity in the shipbuilding industry, with global demand estimated at about 800 million in deadweight tonnage and China's capacity at 1.2 billion tonnage (He, 2014). The glut set off worries that a



*Figure 4.* Marine economy by region in 2013 (SOA, 2014).

third of China's shipbuilding industry may close by 2018 and calls to halt any new projects before 2017 (The Naval Architect, 2014).

As China's ocean economy grows, China is projected to increase its consumption of ocean resources. According to one Chinese observer, China currently consumes just 1.3 percent of fisheries and 4 percent of oil in ocean areas beyond national jurisdiction, but by 2050 the country should consume 20 percent of these resources, in line with the country's share of the world population (Yan, Fang, & Gao, 2013).

### **A Comprehensive Ocean Development Strategy**

While protecting ocean interests, at the same time sea power also serves nationalistic needs for prestige and status (Mahan, 1897). Furthermore, "the PRC may very well be the most status conscious country in the world" (Deng, 2008). China's interests in becoming a sea power exceed its desire to merely reap the rewards of a robust ocean economy. Being a strong maritime power is a marker of being a global power (Ross, 2009; for historical examples of land powers developing maritime interests, see

Potter, 2014). In an April 2012 speech in Fujian Province, then Premier Wen Jiabao signaled this shift from developing China's ocean economy to a more comprehensive ocean development strategy, saying:

China is a large continental country, but it is also a large ocean country, with broad strategic interests in the ocean, and an exceptional and magnificent ocean civilization in history. But the current situation regarding the ocean makes one anxious. China's citizens' ocean awareness is not strong enough. . . . In the 12th Five-year Plan period, we specifically opened up and elaborated on the concept "promote ocean economic development" and put forward "formulate and implement ocean development strategy." This is the great change in our country's strategic thinking. (SOA Ocean Development Strategy Task Force, 2013)

China is developing a comprehensive national ocean strategy, just as other countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan and Russia have done (F. Gao, Wang, & Tang, 2009). Recent administrative changes are designed to facilitate the coordination necessary to more comprehensively implement a national ocean development strategy. The next section traces the evolution of the political institutions for China's ocean governance.

## The Evolution of China's Ocean Development Strategy

China's ocean development has been long in the making. The main organization responsible for China's ocean policy is the State Oceanic Administration (SOA). The SOA was established in 1964. The SOA created an "Ocean Development Strategy Research Institute" (海洋發展戰略研究所) in 1987, although its official English name is the China Institute for Marine Affairs (CIMA).<sup>2</sup> CIMA is tasked with researching long-term strategic issues such as national ocean policy, law, economy, and natural resources. In 2006, CIMA began publishing a weighty annual volume—*China's Ocean Development Report*—detailing China's ocean development strategy along legal, economic, and scientific fronts.

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<sup>2</sup>國家海洋局海洋發展戰略研究所 (State Oceanic Administration, China Institute for Marine Affairs (CIMA)), [www.cima.gov.cn](http://www.cima.gov.cn)



China's central authority began viewing marine resource development as an important component of national development strategy in the 1990s, taking steps to vigorously promote marine economic development as a part of overall economic development (Cao, 2007). In accordance with document "1991 No. 94" issued by the State Planning Commission in 1991 referred to as the "Letter on Beginning National Ocean Development Planning Work," the SOA issued "The National Ocean Development Plan" (全國海洋開發規劃) (Zhou, 1991-1993). The first work meeting on the national ocean development plan, which launched ocean development as a policy agenda, took place on 1 May 1991 and was attended by 21 central-level ministries and bureaus, 12 leading small groups dealing with ocean matters from coastal provinces and cities, as well as various other groups and experts working on ocean issues from all levels of government.

Throughout the 1990s, the ocean increasingly became prioritized as both the international community and China focused attention on the ocean. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) went into effect in 1994, and China ratified the treaty in 1996. The establishment of exclusive economic zones (EEZs), which gave countries exclusive jurisdiction over the resources found within 200 nautical miles of their coastlines, shone a spotlight on the potential to develop ocean resources like seabed petroleum and mining resources, as well as living resources like fisheries. In the late 1990s, China signed bilateral treaties with three neighboring countries on shared fisheries resources. UNCLOS also contributed to simmering maritime disputes as countries raced to claim territory and attendant jurisdiction according to the new framework, which we are still seeing unfold in the East China Sea and South China Sea. The 1990s also brought more attention to the importance of the marine environment. Inspired by the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit's *Agenda 21*, China drew up its own *Agenda 21* on the environment and sustainable development, and then a specific *Ocean Agenda 21* in 1996 (SOA, 1996).

China's ocean strategy and policy picked up speed in the first decade of the 21st century. In November 2002, the report of the 16th National

Party Congress proposed “implementing ocean development” (實施海洋開發) in its section on economic construction and reform (Communist Party of China, 2002).

Commenting on the 2002 party report, one SOA official explained his calculations on the matter:

As history shows, developing the ocean and becoming a strong ocean power can take many decades or even over 100 years. It took Russia 400 years to go from being a continental nation to a coastal one. The United States took fifty years to become a great ocean nation, from when Mahan brought up being a strong Pacific Ocean nation in the 19th century to the Second World War. Using [mathematical models] to estimate, China’s ocean economic development before 1998 was in a stage of nurturing, between 1999 and 2015 is in a period of growing, between 2016 and 2033 will be in a period of flourishing, and after 2034 will be in a period of maturity. (Z. G. Gao, 2007)

The author further predicted that between 2010 and 2030, China will be a strong Pacific sea power, and that between 2030 and 2050 China will become a strong global sea power.

About half a year later, on 7 May 2003, the State Council issued a document called “Outline of the National Ocean Economic Development Plan” (State Council, 2003). The issuance of this plan marks the first of its kind in the history of the PRC and is therefore significant (Li, 2012). In the preface announcing the plan, the State Council writes, “The ocean contains rich biological, hydrocarbon, and mineral resources; developing the marine economy has important significance in terms of promoting the rational distribution and industrial restructuring of the coastal area economy, and in terms of maintaining China’s sustained, healthy, and rapid economic development.” The beginning of the plan states, “China is a great ocean nation, the ocean area under its jurisdiction is vast, and the potential for the development and use of resources is great. Accelerating the development of the marine industry and promoting the development of the marine economy has important meaning for the formation of a new point of economic growth for the people and for realizing the goal of fully building a moderately prosperous society.” The plan goes on to set national development targets for marine industries such as fisheries, maritime transport, hydrocarbon resources, travel and tourism, shipbuilding,

and marine pharmaceuticals.

A researcher at the SOA explained the importance of natural resources for China, particularly with regard to four types of marine natural resource needs: energy; living organisms and food security; mineral resources; and spring water. The author elaborates:

Without a doubt, the issue of resource security is of utmost importance to China. . . . First of all, China's population is large and the natural resources the people rely on for existence and development must not be lacking. Secondly, China's natural resources are in short supply, the volume per capita is low. . . . Thirdly, in order to maintain and strengthen China's status as a great country, it means guaranteeing China's resource security is required; in order to be an important pole in a multipolar world, China must not be under the control of others. . . . Fourthly, resource security is a foundation for China's social and political stability; a resource crisis would certainly cause a social and political upheaval at some level, so guaranteeing resource security is a political requirement for China. (Cao, 2007)

At the 17th National Party Congress in October 2007, the party report called for “developing marine industry” (發展海洋產業) (Communist Party of China, 2007). The following year, the State Council published another document entitled “Outline of the National Marine Development Plan” (State Council, 2008). The plan called for diligently building China into a strong ocean power in order to enhance comprehensive national power and international competitiveness, and to minimize vulnerability to risk. Instead of only focusing on economic development, the plan takes a more integrated approach to ocean development by addressing marine resource management, the environment, the economy, rights and interests, and security.

The new emphasis on ocean development is reflected in successive five-year plans. The Tenth Five-year Plan from March 2001 only mentions the ocean briefly in relation to other priorities like energy resource needs and environmental protection (Central Government, 2001). However, the difference between the Tenth and Eleventh Five-year Plans is noticeable. The Eleventh Five-year Plan, promulgated in March 2006, has a section (within a larger chapter) on “protecting and developing ocean resources” and calls for “strengthening ocean knowledge, safeguarding ocean rights and interests, protecting marine ecology, developing ocean resources,

implementing comprehensive ocean management, and promoting marine economic development,” followed by more specific prescriptions (Central Government, 2006). Five years later, in the 2011 Twelfth Five-year Plan, ocean development gets a chapter of its very own entitled “Promoting Ocean Economic Development” with two sections entitled “optimizing the marine industrial structure” and “strengthening comprehensive ocean management” (Central Government, 2011). The plan lists targets for developing the marine economy similarly as before though with more detail, and also mentions new areas of marine spatial planning; improving ports; addressing land-based sources of pollution; developing special ocean economic development pilot projects; protecting and developing outlying islands; regulating the use of uninhabited islands; improving emergency and disaster response systems; strengthening comprehensive ocean survey and mapping work; developing polar and high seas scientific investigation; increasing maritime enforcement; strengthening bilateral and multilateral consultations; and actively participating in international marine affairs.

One Chinese article counted up the words devoted to ocean use in these recent five-year plans. The Tenth Five-year Plan devoted 59 Chinese characters to ocean issues. By the Eleventh Five-year Plan, it was 199 characters. The most recent Twelfth Five-year Plan used 499 characters on ocean development (“Guojia haiyang ju jiang,” 2013).

The state has also issued five-year plans on more specific areas of ocean development. In 2006, the Ministry of Agriculture began issuing a National Fisheries Five-year Plan (Ministry of Agriculture, 2007, 2011). In late 2009, the SOA announced plans to develop a National Polar Exploration Five-year Plan, which was released soon thereafter (“Guojia haiyang ju Fujuzhang,” 2009). In 2011, the China Ocean Mineral Resources R&D Association released an International Ocean Area Resource Exploration and Development Five-year Plan (SOA Development Strategy Task Force, 2013). The state also released a five-year plan on the marine standards, which set out plans to revise 118 national standards and 361 industry standards, as well as improve administration, management, and enforcement of ocean-related standards (Central Government, 2012). The State Council issued the first National Ocean Economic Development

Five-year Plan in September 2012 (State Council, 2012). The Ocean Economic Development Five-year Plan included targets for 2015 such as adding 2.6 million ocean-related jobs; improving marine science and technology so that these areas will contribute more than 60 percent of ocean GDP, up from 54.5 percent in 2010; and establishing 80 new marine protected areas, to cover 3 percent of ocean areas.

Policy changes at the end of the Hu-Wen Administration indicated China's shift toward a more comprehensive ocean development strategy. At the 18th National Party Congress in November 2012, the then President Hu Jintao stated, "We should enhance our capacity for exploiting marine resources, develop the marine economy, protect the marine ecological environment, resolutely safeguard China's maritime rights and interests, and build China into a maritime power" ("Full text of Hu," 2012). In accordance with his call, in early 2013, the State Council issued a National Maritime Five-year Plan to be jointly implemented by the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Land and Resources, and the SOA (SOA, 2013a, 2013b). This Five-year Plan is based and expands upon the "National Marine Development Plan" that was issued by the State Council in 2008, as discussed above. The Plan is China's most comprehensive ocean policy document to date, with 18 chapters that focus on a broad range of ocean-related topics, such as protecting the marine environment; improving marine resource management; disaster prevention through improving marine surveying, forecasting and climate-change readiness; protecting and developing islands; ecological restoration; participating in international meetings; and so on.

### **Streamlining the Bureaucracy**

Pluralization of actors is certainly one of the challenges that China faces as its ocean development strategy touches upon more and more areas of China's economic and security environment. The various sectors of China's ocean economy involve a number of actors, from private and state-owned enterprises to governing and regulatory agencies. China's civilian maritime enforcement commands until recently involved no fewer

than five different ministries. The state's agencies not only operate at the central level but must coordinate across local-level governments as well. The military hierarchy, including the PLA Navy, is another enormous bureaucracy lying parallel to the state apparatus with which policy must be orchestrated. The central authority began to address this pluralization in early 2013 with a significant restructuring of state agencies.

On 10 March 2013 at the annual meeting of the National People's Congress (NPC), the State Council announced the formation of a high-level coordinating body called the National Ocean Commission (國家海洋委員會) ("Guowuyuan jigou," 2013). Though based at the SOA, the Commission will bring together leadership from multiple ministries to research and formulate China's ocean development strategy and coordinate major ocean-related programs. The Commission has been placed under the administrative leadership of the Central Committee, the State Council, and the Central Military Commission. The Commission is tasked with strengthening the "coordinated planning and comprehensive harmonization" of the state's various ocean tasks. As one Chinese analyst noted, now that China has established a National Ocean Commission, it is only a matter of time before we hear the official announcement of "China's National Ocean Strategy" (Ye, 2013).

Until 2013, China had five maritime law enforcement commands administered by five different government agencies. At the same March 2013 meeting, State Councilor Ma Kai (馬凱) announced plans to consolidate four of the five enforcement forces. The reorganization brought together the China Maritime Police (公安邊防海警); China Maritime Surveillance (中國海監); the Anti-Smuggling Bureau (中國海關緝私局); and the Fisheries Law and Enforcement Command (中國漁政) under the administration of the SOA and the Ministry of Public Security (for background on these forces, see Goldstein, 2010). The announcement at the NPC referred to this restructuring as "turning four fingers into a fist" (4根手指握成了一隻拳頭) in order to safeguard China's ocean rights and interests (Erickson & Collins, 2013; "Guojia haiyang ju jiang," 2013). The development, which received significant press attention and comment from neighboring countries, is the latest step in attempts to streamline

fragmented and redundant maritime forces. One reason why the five enforcement forces were uncoordinated and weak is the fact that they were not that old—three out of the five forces were established between 1998 and 2000. In 1998, the Chinese government enacted reforms of its administrative organs, attempting to clearly delineate the responsibilities of the agencies concerned with ocean issues. Through this process, the government either created or improved maritime ocean patrols, resulting in three new maritime enforcement authorities (J. L. Wu, 2011). The 2013 establishment of a comprehensive maritime law enforcement authority was the latest reform, advocated by Chinese observers as necessary for China to protect its ocean resource environment and safeguard its ocean rights and interests (Wang & Sun, 2010).

In June 2013, the State Council announced a major reorganization of the SOA's functions and staff structure in accordance with the changes announced in March, that is, explicitly putting the SOA in charge of the National Ocean Commission and transferring enforcement duties jointly to the SOA and the Ministry of Public Security (State Council, 2013). The document created new administrative positions to oversee the new China Coast Guard (中國海警局), including a deputy secretary and other leadership positions to oversee the 11 local-level coast guard offices and a staff of 16,926. The state removed some of the previous responsibilities of the SOA, and transferred others from central- to local-level administration. The document strengthened the SOA's jurisdiction over laws and regulations concerning China's ocean areas, marine environmental protection, scientific exploration, and island-use planning. The State Council made the SOA responsible for the implementation of ocean development policies overall, including marine spatial planning; island development; disaster monitoring; economic statistics and information monitoring; and representing the state in international meetings and negotiations related to marine affairs. The document delineated the division of responsibilities shared between the SOA and other agencies with marine-related duties, such as the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of Land and Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture's Bureau of Fisheries, the Customs Administration, the Ministry of Transportation, and the Ministry of En-

vironmental Protection.

Implementation of the new policy changes is still unfolding. While the restructured China Coast Guard commenced operations in July 2013, it remains as yet unclear what the National Ocean Commission has accomplished—indeed even whether it has convened its inaugural meeting. Nor is it apparent how the Commission will work with the PLAN or entities such as the China National Offshore Oil Company (CNOOC), which placed a controversial oilrig off the coast of Vietnam in May 2014. As one Chinese official and naval analyst commented, the agencies governing ocean-related activities remain relatively fragmented and the reforms need to be deepened (Jin & Liu, 2014).

### **Ocean Policy under Xi and Li**

The new Xi-Li administration has thus far continued the ocean development policies of the previous administration, though the tone of the new administration toward the maritime disputes in the East and South China Seas has been more strident. President Xi Jinping presided over a Politburo study session on the ocean on 30 July 2013 (“Xi Jinping: Jinyibu,” 2013). In a speech during the session, Xi acknowledged humanity’s focus on the ocean in the 21st century, and the importance of the ocean to China’s safeguarding of national sovereignty, security, and development interests. With “China’s marine industry having entered the best period of history” thus far, China has “laid the foundation to become a strong sea power.” Xi called for developing marine resources, protecting the marine environment, promoting marine science and technology, and protecting national maritime rights.

The new administration initially made moves to enhance maritime relations with ASEAN countries, though this has not prevented the deterioration of relations between China and those countries. At the 14th annual China-ASEAN Summit in 2011, then Premier Wen Jiabao announced a RMB 3 billion (\$477 million) fund on maritime cooperation between China and ASEAN (“Full Text of Chinese Premier,” 2011). Building



upon this initiative, President Xi and Premier Li Keqiang proposed a “maritime silk road” on their first trip to Southeast Asia in October 2013, the concept being a revival of the centuries-old Chinese maritime trading route (J. Wu & Zhang, 2013). China has also extended invitations to Sri Lanka and India to join the plan (Panda, 2014). While on the surface economic- and trade-oriented in purpose, the idea was likely also a way for China to offset some of the wariness its neighbors feel over China’s maritime intentions in Southeast Asia. At the annual meeting of the National People’s Congress in March 2014, Premier Li once again called for promoting the maritime silk road, stressing the economic benefits of doing so (“Li Keqiang: Zhuajin,” 2014). In subsequent months, however, relations between China and its SE Asian neighbors worsened to the point that one Chinese commentator noted that shifting the strategic focus of the “maritime silk road” to Europe was appropriate and wise (Che, 2014). In a June 2014 visit to Greece at the China-Greece Maritime Cooperation Forum, Premier Li praised a joint Chinese-Greek port project and called for increased cooperation during the “China-Greece Marine Year” in 2015 (Mu, 2014).

To support China’s ocean development, the state is also working to increase knowledge and expertise about the ocean in the education system and through popular media. China is emphasizing ocean development in institutes of research and higher education. In 2011, China’s 179 marine scientific research institutes received RMB 232.22 billion (\$37.58 billion) in funding, with RMB 13.90 billion (\$2.25 billion) as government investment (SOA, 2013c). In the same year, there were 179,165 undergraduate and graduate students in marine programs in higher education, 104,479 students in ocean-related vocational schools, and another 25,154 in adult education programs (SOA, 2013c). The SOA and the Ministry of Education are now jointly offering scholarships for marine studies at the graduate level at four universities in China for students from countries surrounding the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean, Pacific Island Nations, and developing African countries (“2014 Marine Scholarship,” 2014).

The state is also trying to capture the imagination of Chinese citizens by focusing more on the ocean in a popular sense. The term “ocean cul-

ture” or “marine culture” (海洋文化) is used to refer to developing awareness about the ocean. Writers in Taiwan, Zhejiang, and Guangdong began writing about “ocean culture” in the 1980s, and in the 1997 Ocean University of China opened the country’s first Ocean Culture Research Institute (海洋文化研究所) (N. E. Song & Ma, 2011). The effort to develop China’s ocean culture is connected to a desire to raise people’s awareness about the current marine legal system (“the foundation for science and sustainable development”), while also increasing public interest in the ocean (Sheng, 2008). In October 2012, the country’s first public National Maritime Museum was approved. The museum will be located in Tianjin, a three-year construction project commencing in 2014 at the cost of RMB 2.8 billion. The museum will feature exhibits such as the ancient ocean; the ocean today; China’s enchanting four seas; Chinese ocean civilization; navies; polar exploration; and protecting marine mammals.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Just as China tries to reassure other countries about its intentions as it develops, the country does the same with regard to its developing sea might. After Hu Jintao’s address in November 2012, mentioned above, a spokesperson from the Ministry of Defense quickly clarified that even though “China wants to become a maritime power in order to enhance its capacity to exploit marine resources, develop the marine economy, safeguard the country’s maritime rights and interests, and ensure a sustainable economic and social development. . . . That does not mean that China is aiming at expanding its presence at sea, nor at marine hegemony” (“China Seeks Maritime Power,” 2012).

“Sea power” (海權) comes up frequently in Chinese writing on ocean issues. One book on Chinese sea power provides a history of China’s recovery, protection, and development of its sea power, discussing Mahan’s definition of “sea power” and the history of the West’s experience with sea power; sea power can mean anything from military to economic to spiritual/cultural strength, and the point is made that China’s sea power

is essentially different from the West's in that China does not seek "hegemonic" sea power—its sea power development is limited (Shi, 2007).

China's rising naval capabilities and maritime territorial claims certainly make the country's neighbors wary, although the greatest potential for naval conflict is probably between China and the United States. While China's ocean economic growth in itself may be little cause for alarm, development of China's PLA Navy makes U.S. defense analysts nervous (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2014). A cornerstone of U.S. policy toward Asia for nearly a century has been to prevent any one power from dominating the Asia-Pacific, be it Japan, the Soviet Union, or most recently, China (Gompert, 2013). An important component of this policy is assuring freedom of navigation—preserving U.S. access to marine resources and shipping lanes as well as passage for its naval forces (Russel, 2014). With a weaker military, China's main naval defense strategy is "anti-access and area denial" in order to disrupt U.S. control over access to parts of maritime Asia. Mutual distrust between the United States and China threatens to cause a security dilemma in which both countries build up naval power to a worrisome degree. Chinese and U.S. disagreement over whether the interpretation of freedom of navigation in EEZs includes military surveys, military maneuvers, and military reconnaissance contributes to incendiary skirmishes between the two countries, for example the *USNS Impeccable* and *USS Cowpens* incidents in 2009 and 2013, respectively (Ren & Cheng, 2005). While the United States takes no official position on how the maritime disputes in Asia are resolved, it does support their peaceful resolution in accordance with the provisions of UNCLOS, whereas Chinese claims are at best ambiguous and at worst at odds with the convention.<sup>3</sup> China remains suspicious of U.S. relations

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<sup>3</sup>China submitted a *note verbale* to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in 2009 which stated: "China has indisputable sovereignty over the islands in the South China Sea and the adjacent waters, and enjoys sovereign rights and jurisdiction over the relevant waters as well as the seabed and subsoil thereof (see attached map)," attaching the "nine-dashed lines" map of the South China Sea. The statement is unclear as to whether China is claiming the formations in the area and attendant jurisdiction (territorial sea or EEZs) or perhaps the area featured in the map as "historic waters." See document

with other Asian countries involved in maritime disputes. Challenges such as the Senkaku/Diaoyu/Diaoyutai dispute, and the various claims in the South China Sea will not be easy to overcome.

However, the United States and China agree on many aspects of ocean governance as well. Oceans featured prominently in the sixth round of the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue, held in July 2014. The United States and China reaffirmed seven commitments in the areas of joint fisheries enforcement, coast guard cooperation, ocean law and policy dialogue, and marine science and environmental protection efforts with China (U.S. Department of State, 2014). Because both countries are pursuing comprehensive ocean development strategies that are global in scope, potential for cooperation exists (National Ocean Council, 2013). While issues like fisheries depletion and the effects of climate change on the ocean are global challenges, they also provide opportunities for the United States and China to cooperate with other countries on finding solutions to these problems. China has made significant advances in marine spatial planning that could benefit the United States and other countries (Fang, Zhang, Zhang, & Hong, 2011). China's cooperation is necessary for furthering international governance of the high seas, areas of the ocean that belong to no country. Countries may also cooperate with China on maritime security issues like disaster relief and piracy, as well as science and technology initiatives like polar exploration.

Cooperation on nontraditional security issues in Asia may also contribute to relieving more traditional security concerns. Because the primary reason for China's naval development is to protect China's growing reliance on marine commercial interests, the United States can contribute to collective maritime security in the Asia-Pacific by addressing marine resources like fisheries and sea bed minerals. Living marine resources in particular are important to the economies and human security of Asia-Pacific nations. The United States could contribute resources to develop-

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CML/17/2009, [http://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs\\_new/submissions\\_files/mysvnm33\\_09/chn\\_2009re\\_mys\\_vnm\\_e.pdf](http://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/mysvnm33_09/chn_2009re_mys_vnm_e.pdf)

ing regional fisheries management organizations and marine protected areas in East Asia. Asia's fisheries resources are the richest in the world. Better conserving these resources through regional management would ensure long-term food security for people in the region, including China. The United States could also form multilateral coast guard partnerships with China and other countries. The United States and China have a successful coast guard partnership that jointly patrols the Northwest Pacific Ocean for illegal driftnet fishing of anadromous fish stocks, which should serve as a model for additional partnerships to combat illegal fishing and other crime at sea. Multilateral coast guard partnerships in East Asia would build trust among states.

In conclusion, while maritime security concerns are the foremost challenges in Asia at the beginning of the 21st century, opportunities also exist for cooperation between China and other countries on ocean governance. Through the development of a national ocean strategy, China has more clearly identified interests it also shares in common with the world. However, whether these opportunities will be pursued or lost is still unclear.

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