

EAST SEA (SOUTH CHINA SEA) STUDIES



E S N A P S H O T

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ACTIVITIES OF THE CLAIMANTS

China to invest in “Sansha” islands

26th December | China Daily

China plans to spend 10 billion yuan (\$1.6 billion) to build an airport, piers and other infrastructure on islands administered by the South China city of “Sansha”, the 21st Century Business Herald reported. The newspaper cited Jiang Dingzhi, governor of Hainan province.

[Full report](#)

China sends patrol vessel to South China Sea

27th December | China Daily

China on 27th December sent an oceangoing patrol vessel equipped with a helipad to the South China Sea, the first of its kind to be put into service there. The vessel, Haixun 21, will be under the administration of the Hainan Maritime Safety Administration. It will monitor maritime traffic safety, investigate maritime accidents, detect pollution, carry out search and rescue work and fulfill international conventions, said Huang He, deputy head of the maritime bureau of the Ministry of Transport. Haixun 21 was put into use in 2002. It is 93.2 meters long with a maximum sailing distance of 4,000 nautical miles (7,408 kilometers) without refueling.



[Full report](#)

Two new projects of CNOOC Limited Start Production

28th December | CNOOC Web Page

On December 28th, CNOOC Limited, a Chinese state-owned company, announced that Panyu 4-2/5-1 oil field adjustment project and Lihua 4-1 oil field located in the Pearl River Mouth Basin of South China Sea, successfully commenced production. Panyu 4-2/5-1 oil field has an average water depth of about 100 meters. The adjustment project was designed to share the existing facilities to develop Panyu 4-2/5-1 oil field more effectively. The adjustment project was expected to hit its peak production in 2014.

[Full report](#)

Taiwan to start oil exploration in the South China Sea

28th December | Taipei Times

During a meeting at the legislature in Taipei yesterday, Bureau of Energy officials confirmed that the Ministry of Economic Affairs’ Bureau of Mines, in cooperation with CPC Corp, Taiwan would send ships to waters near Itu Aba to conduct exploration for potential oil resources next year. Bureau of Energy Director-General Jerry Ou told the Foreign Affairs and National Defense Committee that a monthly budget of NT\$17 million (US\$583,670) would be allocated to fund the efforts.

[Full report](#)

The Philippines

Philippines hits China plan to fortify “Sansha”

27th December | Inquirer

The Philippines on December 26th denounced China’s decision to strengthen islands at the center of territorial disputes in the South China Sea as a violation of international law. “Sansha City has been a subject of a Philippine protest as its administrative jurisdiction encompasses Philippine territory and maritime zones in the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea),” the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said. “China’s action to fortify Sansha City is an attempt to reinforce its excessive nine-dash claim, which is a violation of international law, especially the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea”.

[Full report](#)

Philippines to buy 3 naval helicopters

27th December | ABS-CBN News



The Philippines said it would buy three naval helicopters from an Anglo-Italian manufacturer as part of its military modernization program amid a territorial dispute with China. The three AW 109 "Power" helicopters from AgustaWestland will be acquired for P1.337 billion (\$32.5 million) under an emergency procurement program, the defense department said in a statement. "The acquisition of these naval helicopters is one concrete step towards the fulfillment of our goal to modernize the Philippine Navy

and our armed forces in general," Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin was quoted as saying.

[Full report](#)

Philippines blasts China anew over patrol in South China Sea

28th December | Inquirer

The Philippines on December 28th reiterated its calls for respect to its maritime domains in the South China Sea, saying that it “strongly objects” to Chinese patrol of these areas. “The Philippines again calls on China to respect our territorial sovereignty and exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The Philippines strongly objects to the Chinese patrol of Philippine maritime domain in the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea),” Department of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Assistant Secretary Raul Hernandez said in a statement sent to reporters. “Such patrol will not validate the nine-dash lines (claim of China) and is contrary to China’s obligation under international law including UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea),” the statement added.

[Full report](#)

Philippines increasing air patrols over South China Sea

29th December | PhilStar

The Philippine military's Western Command (Wescom) is increasing the frequency of its aerial and sovereignty patrols over the South China Sea following China's reported deployment of a naval ship to patrol the region. On December 27th, through its state-run Xinhua news agency, China announced the deployment of Haixun 21, the first oceangoing patrol vessel equipped with a helipad, to conduct maritime patrol in the South China Sea. "We will validate this through constant aerial and sovereignty patrols," Wescom commander Lt. Gen. Juancho Sabban told The STAR in reaction to the report. "We are also ready to enforce Philippines and international laws," Sabban said.

[Full report](#)

Singapore

Singaporean Prime Minister: India has interests in the South China Sea

25th December | The Times Of India

Attending the India-Asean Commemorative Summit in New Delhi, Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said that India has an interest in freedom of navigation in the South China Sea. In addition, he believed that India has a big account in south-east Asia because there are many Indian companies there.

[Full report](#)



REGIONAL SNAPSHOTS

China “noted” India’s statement on the South China Sea

25th December | Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China

In responses to the question “Vietnamese Prime Minister recently urged India to play a bigger role on the South China Sea issue. What is China's comment”, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying said :”we have noted the Indian side's statement on this issue. We hope that in the spirit of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), all parties can make concrete efforts for the maintenance of peace and stability in the South China Sea.”

[Full report](#)

U.S. warship, submarine to visit Philippines

28th December | PhilStar



A U.S. warship and submarine will arrive in the Philippines on Saturday, December 29th for routine port calls, according to the U.S. Embassy in Manila. USS Gridley (DDG-101), an Arleigh-Burke Class Destroyer, will arrive in Cebu, while USS Bremerton (SSN 698), a submarine of the Los Angeles class design, will arrive in Subic Bay. The visit "highlights the strong historic, community, and military connections between the United States and the Republic of the Philippines," the Embassy said in a statement.

[Full report](#)

Chinese diplomat calls for better Sino-U.S. ties

29th December | Beijing Review

China's Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Zhijun on December 28th put forward a four-point proposal to promote Sino-U.S. ties. Zhang made the proposal in response to a media report on "strategic distrust" between China and the United States as he addressed the 8th Lanting Forum held by China's Foreign Ministry. First, the two countries need to have candid and in-depth communication so as to avoid misunderstandings regarding each other's strategies. Second, the two countries need to vigorously expand new bright spots in their pragmatic cooperation. Third, the two sides need to work to ensure that dialogue and cooperation outweigh frictions and differences in the Asia-Pacific region. Fourth, the two sides need to truly respect each other's core interests.

[Full report](#)

COMMENTARIES & ANALYSES

China's Bad Diplomacy

By James Clad, Robert A. Manning



A joke now making the rounds in Asia asks, "who is America's most effective diplomat in Asia?" The punch line brings knowing laughter: "'Mr. Beijing.' Yes, Mr. Bob Beijing is playing America's best hand." The joke's sting lies in the law of unintended consequences. Beijing's increasingly provocative moves include cutting a Vietnamese seismic-exploration ship's cables, disrupting oil exploration, declaring the entire South China Sea under Chinese sovereignty and making some hitherto unpublicized but very sensitive challenges to Malaysia. All seem tailor-made to

produce exactly what China says it doesn't want: a de facto anti-China coalition backed discreetly by the United States and reaching from India to the Sea of Japan. From recent travels in Japan and elsewhere in Asia, we have returned with the following conclusions: First, territorial tensions have increased with deceitful PRC moves. Second, China has become more aggressive in the South and East China Seas. Third, China is particularly singling out Japan. Finally, onshore temperatures have also risen because of Beijing's minority policies. Beijing is buying itself real trouble. A better path still lies open: China can reach an understanding with the United States about each country's respective Asian footprint and then join in stewardship of a rules-based maritime system. But Beijing's recent moves instead entrench a stupid and self-marginalizing policy, deepening Sino-American mutual suspicions and making that mutually beneficial destination harder to reach.

[Full report](#)

Three possible scenarios in South China Sea

By Angguntari C. Sari

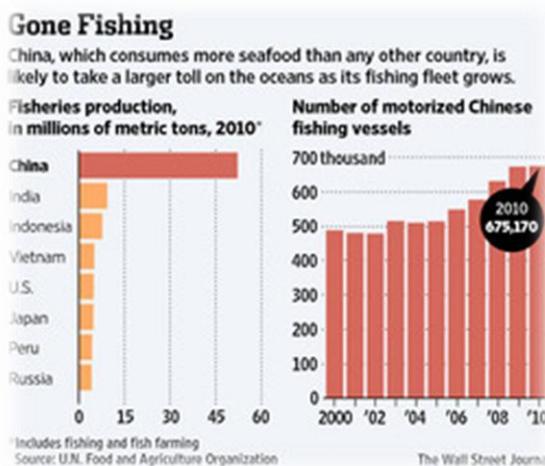
The projection of the future of the South China Sea is structured along six key determinants of stability. The six drivers are first, the presence of a hegemonic power that has the capacity and incentive to create a stable order, second, the equal distribution of military power and avoidance of overly aggressive behavior, third, the adherence to international norms of peaceful settlement of disputes, fourth, a preference to maintain international economic ties and development, fifth, the presence of institutions to regularize dialogue and cooperation, and sixth, united domestic entities that prefer win-win and peaceful solutions. So, what does the future hold for the South China Sea? Do the six factors correspond to the current situation? There are three possible scenarios; the apocalypse scenario, the dream scenario and the status-quo scenario. The apocalypse, or worst possible case, scenario would be one in which the conflict among the disputants erupts and involves the US. The dream scenario refers

to a situation in which the territorial claims are completely and peacefully resolved, and a win-win solution is produced. In the status-quo scenario, which is the most likely scenario for the next 10 years, the claimants adopt half-hearted attitudes to resolving the territorial claims and maintaining stability. The current information suggests that a major conflict will not take place. An encouraging sign has come from China's next leader Xi Jinping. In his address to the annual meeting with ASEAN members, held in the southern Chinese city of Nanning recently, Xi said China was committed to "common development and a peaceful regional solution to the dispute". The claimants' desire to maintain regional peace and stability, however, might not be enough to ensure future stability. The ability of central governments to persuade the various domestic institutions, and their peoples to adopt a win-win, comprehensive, peaceful solution is also crucial.

[Full article](#)

China's Hunger for Fish Upsets Seas

By *Chuyin-Wei Yap* and *Sameer Mohindru*



China's growing hunger for seafood is testing relations with other countries and worrying foreign officials and scientists over the potential damage its massive fleet could do to global fishing stocks. In the latest example, Argentina said on Wednesday that it had captured on Monday two Chinese fishing vessels that it said were illegally fishing in its waters. In recent weeks, South Korea seized a Chinese boat and detained 24 sailors for allegedly illegally fishing in the Yellow Sea. Vietnam has accused Chinese fishing boats of cutting its gas-exploration cables at sea. In a review earlier this year, a congressional agency set up to explore the national-security implications of

U.S.-China economic relations said China's growing fleet has "global implications." "China, in particular, uses the resources of its five maritime security agencies to enforce its claims in disputed waters, by escorting Chinese fishing vessels and enforcing seasonal fishing bans on foreign vessels," Commissioner Daniel Slane said at a hearing in January. "These civilian fleets allow Beijing to maintain a maritime presence in disputed waters without having a consistent or overt naval presence." China's hunger is growing at a time when around 87% of global fisheries are seen to be at full exploitation, overexploited, or depleted, according to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization.

[Full commentary](#)

India Dips A Toe Into The South China Sea Dispute

By *Zachary Fillingham*

Although India doesn't have any direct territorial claim in the area, the waters are strategically important to New Delhi for three reasons. First, like for any trade-dependent country, the South China Sea represents an important global shipping route and freedom of navigation must be maintained. Second, India's state-run Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) owns a stake in waters claimed by

Vietnam. And third, and perhaps most importantly, the South China Sea represents an opportunity for an Indian riposte against China's 'string of pearls' naval encirclement of the Indian subcontinent. As far as the Indian government is concerned, an energy stake in the South China Sea represents more than just an economic windfall. It affords the Indian Navy a position, however small, in the growing bloc of countries that don't want to see the South China Sea become an exclusive military domain of China. The Indian government even has a handy rationale for jumping into the fracas: it's merely protecting Indian economic interests and working to ensure free passage on the international waterways that global trade is built on. This is the very same rationale that China has used to project its economic and military influence into India's own backyard, in Sri Lanka and Pakistan. In the wider sense, this is a case of India trying to beat China at its own game. Yet it remains to be seen what kind of impact it will have on the long-running dispute in the South China Sea.

[Full analysis](#)

Asean welcomes rising India as it looks east

By Kavi Chongkittavorn

Against such unsettling Asean-China relations and their strategic implications, the leaders from Asean and India are scheduled to meet 20-21 December in New Delhi. Beyond the diplomatic pleasantries, both Asean and Indian leaders want to send strong signals to the world that their relations are more than skin deep and encompass more than economic, social and cultural sphere. The most important message would certainly be that their relations are getting closer and becoming more strategic. India, with its rather benign approach to the grouping, is stepping up its diplomacy to establish foothold as a power to be reckoned with in the 21st century. Although India has never explicitly offered itself as a balancing wheel vis a vis China, the Asean countries have recognized that in the long run, India would be the most crucial strategic partner of Asean in countervailing China's growing influence in the region. Therefore, New Delhi's key strategic thinking from now on would essentially be assuring the Asean countries that India is a dependable and reliable strategic partner. View from this perspective, India is complimenting the US rebalancing efforts towards the region while Japan and South Korea and the rest of key US allies, are more focus on the security in Northeast Asia and South China Sea. With the more dynamic strategic landscape in the region, India cannot remain passive. The Asean leaders, as a whole, do not feel threaten by the rise of India. They welcome it and want to see India become more active in engaging them.

[Full article](#)