



CHRIS SATTLER

China Coast Guard ships are becoming an increasingly visible presence in the region, as “rights-protection missions have expanded in number and intensity.” Concomitantly, “the geographic scope of Chinese maritime activism is also expanding.”

and intensity. Prior to 2010, the fleet engaged in mostly declaratory law enforcement: tracking and verbally harassing foreign surveillance vessels operating in China’s EEZ and patrolling disputed waters to show administration. However, the weiquan fleet is increasingly tasked with missions that transcend the symbolic and declaratory.

Before December 2008, Chinese law-enforcement vessels had never been to the Senkaku Islands. Now they haunt the islets, undermining Japanese administrative control and denying Japanese civilian access to them. Scarborough Shoal is now under China’s “effective control.” The same dynamic appears to be playing out with the Second Thomas Shoal, which Chinese Coast Guard cutters have lately resolved to blockade. Underpinning these events are expanded “regular rights-protection patrols” in disputed waters. The frequency and intensity of recent events at sea inspired He Xuming, Deputy Commander of the CMS East Sea Department, to describe the current situation as “war without gunsmoke” and prompted Chinese analysts to conclude that China has recalibrated its overall approach for dealing with maritime disputes away from weiqian in favor of weiquan.¹⁸

The geographic scope of Chinese maritime activism is also expanding. In the early 2000s, CMS forces rarely took to blue water. Now, China Coast Guard ships are on constant deployment hundreds of miles from the mainland coast. Weiquan forces continue to push the boundaries of their operations. In August 2013 China Coast Guard vessels began patrolling the North and South Luconia Shoals, claimed by Malaysia.¹⁹

These conclusions fit the known facts. They also align with the explicit objectives of Chinese policy. The 12th Five-Year Plan for Maritime Development (2011–2015), for instance, clearly states PRC aspirations to “increase the time and space coverage of rights-protection patrols within jurisdictional waters” and “strengthen effective control over jurisdictional waters.”²⁰ During his tenure (2011–2014), State Oceanic Administration Director Liu Cigui regularly highlighted the need for China to strengthen “administrative

control” in disputed waters. While it is impossible to predict the future trajectory of Chinese maritime rights protection, it is safe to assume that China has built the world’s largest coast guard fleet to turn these aims into reality. ☀

1. 国家海洋局[State Oceanic Administration], 忠诚使命护海疆 砥砺奋进铸华章——中国海监继往开来踏上新征程 [“Be Faithful to the Mission to Protect Maritime Boundaries and Write a New Chapter for China—CMS Goes Forward on a New Journey”], 23 July 2013, www.soa.gov.cn/xw/dfdwdt/jsdw_157/201307/t20130723_26677.html.
2. China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation website, 七〇四所科技产业在新领域接连取得突破 [“704 Research Institute Achieves New Breakthroughs in New Fields”], 14 January 2014, www.csic713.com.cn/_d276530779.htm.
3. Peter Dutton, “Three Disputes, Three Objectives: China and the South China Sea,” *U.S. Naval War College Review*, vol. 64, no. 4 (Autumn 2011), 42–66.
4. 王生, 罗肖[Wang Sheng and Luo Xiao], 国际体系转型与中国周边外交之变: 从维稳到维权[“Transformation in the International System and Changes in Chinese Diplomacy Towards Neighboring States”], 现代国际关系[*Contemporary International Relations*], vol. 1 (2013).
5. 郁志, 荣董奚, 戟张颖[Yu Zhirong, Dong Xiji, and Zhang Ying], 魂系东海再铸蓝色辉煌, 记中国海监东海总队海洋维权执法 [“CMS East Sea Department Achieves New Glory, A Record of CMS East Sea Department Rights Protection Law Enforcement”], 海洋开发与管理 [*Ocean Development and Management*], April 2005.
6. This encounter was filmed by Chinese media and is available on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=TiyeUWQObkg&app=desktop.
7. 高之国[Gao Zhiguo, ed.], 中国海洋发展报告 (2010) [China’s Ocean Development Report (2010)] (Beijing: China Ocean Press, 2010), 169.
8. 中国海监巡航钓鱼岛三周年记 [“Three Years of CMS Patrols to the Diaoyu Islands”], 东西南北 [East West North South], no. 24 (2012), 12.
9. James Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy, 1919–1991*, 3rd edition (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 62–64.
10. 三沙一年驱赶164艘次外国渔船 南海侵权侵渔势头得到遏 [“In One Year Sansha City Expelled 164 Foreign Fishing Vessels, The Problem With Infringement of Fishing Rights Is Being Contained”], 人民网 [Renmin Wang], 18 July 2013, <http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2013/0718/c1001-22245544.html>.
11. Carlyle A. Thayer, “China’s New Wave of Aggressive Assertiveness in the South China Sea,” *International Journal of China Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3 (December 2011), 555–583. Taylor Fravel, “China’s Strategy in the South China Sea,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol. 33, no. 3 (2011), 292–319.
12. 张召忠: “包心菜”战略可有效反制菲占岛 [“Zhang Zhaozhong: ‘Cabbage’ Strategy Can Effectively Counter Philippines Occupation of Islands”], Phoenix TV, <http://v.ifeng.com/news/opinion/201305/52a7b375-14f9-491a-912a-6b31a133fb8e.shtml>.
13. 中国海监成功驱离日侵权船只 [“CMS Successfully Expels Japanese Vessel Infringing on Chinese Rights”], 解放军报 [PLA Daily], 24 April 2013, 4.
14. This incident is narrated in a December 2013 series on CCTV12, called 南海纪行 [South China Sea Journey], available on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYomeD77b8Q.
15. Edward N. Luttwak, *The Political Uses of Sea Power* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).
16. Scott Bentley, “Mapping the Nine-Dash Line: Recent Incidents Involving Indonesia in the South China Sea,” *The Strategist*, 29 October 2013, www.aspistrategist.org.au/mapping-the-nine-dash-line-recent-incidents-involving-indonesia-in-the-south-china-sea/.
17. John Ruwitch, “Satellites and Seafood: China Keeps Fishing Fleet Connected in Disputed Waters,” Reuters, 27 July 2014, www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/28/us-southchinasea-china-fishing-insight-idUSKBN0FW0QP20140728.
18. 芦焱, 钱亚平[Lu Yao and Qian Yaping], 东海海监维权十年记 [“Ten Years of Rights Protection in the East China Sea”], 协商论坛 [Xieshang Luntan], October 2012. 张洁 [Zhang Jie], 黄岩岛模式与中国海洋维权政策的转向东 [“Huangyan Model and the Shift of China’s Maritime Rights Protection Strategy”], 南亚研究 [Southeast Asian Studies], April 2013, 25–31.
19. 推动海洋强国建设不断取得新成就 [“Promote Building of a Maritime Great Power, Keep Making New Achievements”], 中国海洋报 [China Ocean News], 17 January 2014, 2.
20. State Oceanic Administration website, 11 April 2013, www.soa.gov.cn/zwgk/fwgjwyw/shxzfg/201304/t20130411_24765.html.

Mr. Martinson is research administrator at the U.S. Naval War College’s China Maritime Studies Institute, where his duties include editing CMSI publications and managing the CMSI research support effort. He also conducts research on Chinese maritime policy.