INTRODUCTION

Security anxieties continue to pervade in the strategic agenda of many states in the Asia Pacific despite all the countless confidence building measures (CBMs) that have been undertaken since the end of the cold war. In a particular part of the Asia Pacific, there are two major territorial disputes causing security tensions and significantly affecting the overall regional peace and stability - the East China Sea Dispute and the South China Sea Dispute. Territorial disputes in East and South China Sea punctuated by China's sturdy military rise compound the long standing security dilemma of states in the region. Security dilemma also shapes the current security environment of East and South China Sea.

This paper describes the current security environment in East and South China Sea by identifying sources of maritime security dilemma in these two disputed areas. The paper concludes with a discussion on how to ameliorate the security dilemma in East and China Seas in order to prevent armed conflicts to occur in these two of the most important strategic waters of the world.

CURRENT SECURITY ENVIRONMENT IN EAST AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

The East and South China Sea are two contested bodies of water in the Pacific Ocean where China, Japan and other Asian claimants are entangled in complex territorial and maritime boundary disputes. East China Sea is located East of China, West of Japan, South of the Korean Peninsula and North of Taiwan. The Taiwan Strait connects East China Sea with the South China Sea, which is found South of China, West of the Philippines, East of Vietnam and North West of Sabah Malaysia. Though both are different bodies of water, they, however, share strong similarities in terms of disputes over islands, islets, reefs and shoals as well as overlapping claims to maritime boundaries, particularly territorial waters and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Waters of East and South China Sea, in fact, are part of maritime regional security complex in the Asia Pacific where the maritime security interests of one state cannot be realistically being considered apart from another states.¹

¹I consider the waters of East and South China Sea as part of Maritime Regional Security Complex (MRSC). This idea is based on Barry Buzan’s regional security complex. See Barry Buzan, People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post Cold War Era (Harvester Wheatsheaf: London, 1991).

**The author is the Chairman of the Board and Executive Director of the Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research (PIPVTR) and Head of its Center for Intelligence and National Security Studies.
As maritime regional security complex, there are two major patterns of inter-state relations in East and South China Sea: amity and enmity. The concept of amity is characterized by trust and cooperation among states. The concept of enmity, on the other hand, is defined by fear and rivalry generated by the states. Amity involves all types of security relationships ranging from genuine friendship to expectations of mutual protection or support while enmity covers all forms of security relationships set by mutual suspicions and fears.²

In his succeeding works, Buzan reformulated the concept of regional security complex to mean “a set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot be reasonably analyzed or resolved apart from one another.”³ The salient feature of maritime regional security complex, therefore, is the recognition that states are enmeshed in a complex web of security interdependence.

The East and South China Sea belong to a maritime regional security complex because littoral states have developed a highly interdependent relationship that is characterized by either amity or enmity. All contested features in East and South China Sea are like dots that connect all littoral states with one another. Though most of the features in these two bodies of water are too tiny to even appear on Google Earth, they nevertheless loom large in the strategic interests of parties to the conflict because they can serve as base points for an EEZ where claimants can enjoy their sovereignty to pursue all sorts of legitimate economic activities such as fishing, tourism, shipping and gas and oil explorations, among others. Their overlapping claims to EEZ creates a relationship of amity and enmity among littoral states and these two patterns of relationship shape the current security environment in East and South China Sea.

In the East China Sea, existing conflicts occur among China, Japan, Taiwan and even South Korea over the extent of their EEZ.⁴ There are eight disputed islands in East China Sea claimed by Japan as Senkaku Islands and by China as Diaoyu Islands. Both Japan and China have already explored the possibilities of joint development of these islands but sovereignty issues have been preventing them to move forward.

The South China Sea, which has more than 250 contested features, is composed of two major island-chains: the Paracels (called by China as Xisha and by Vietnam as Hoang Sa) and the Spratlys (Called by China as Nansha, by Vietnam as Truong Sa and by the Philippines as Kalayaan or Freedomland). The Paracels are being contested between China, Taiwan and Vietnam while the Spratlys are being claimed in whole or in part by Brunei, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam. In 2002, China and members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) signed the

Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea or DOC in order to uphold peaceful management of disputes and promote joint cooperation. But the exclusion of Taiwan from the DOC poses a great challenge. Moreover, its non-binding character does not prevent claimants to pursue unilateral actions to improve their facilities in their occupied features.

Currently, East and South China Sea are sources of renewed inter-state tensions and major power rivalry not only because of sovereignty claims but also because of some interrelated developments associated with many security issues.

One major issue at present is **energy security**. There are on-going offshore gas field explorations in these two highly contested waters in Asia. With the increasing global demand for alternative sources of energy necessary for national economic growth, tensions in these areas are now rising over sovereignty of existing and potential disputed gas fields. The search for energy security is propelling claimants to behave more assertively to prove and strengthen their ownerships of disputed features.

In East China Sea, it is a public knowledge already that there is oil deposit found as early as 1968. This oil discovery has raised the strategic value of the area for Japan, China, Taiwan and even South Korea. There are varying reports of oil reserve estimates in East China Sea. But China officially provides an estimate of 70 to 160 billion barrels (Bbbl) of oil for the entire East China Sea while others provide an estimate of 100 Bbbl.5

China is asserting its sovereign right in East China Sea over a gas field called Chun Xiao, which is just 400 km away from Zhejiang Province.6 Japan has similar claims over this gas field considering that the area is only 600 km away from Kyushu.

Because Japan currently shares with China the same source for crude oil and natural gas in the sea beds of East China Sea, which is considered to be one of the most prospective oil and gas reserve areas in the world,7 the place has become a fulcrum of Japan-China conflicts.8 Taiwan and South Korea are also involved in the conflict because both declared seabed exploration in the contested area. But the security environment in East China Sea is largely determined by the patterns of relationship between Japan and China.

Similar conflicts occur in South China Sea where claimants are in varying stages of gas and oil explorations. It is estimated that the potential oil resources of the South China Sea is 213 Bbbl. There are conflicting claims, however, about the size of natural gas and oil deposits in the area. According to US Geological Survey, about 60% to 70%

---

of the hydrocarbon resources in the South China Sea are gas.\textsuperscript{9} A research conducted by Chinese experts reveals that that the total gas resources of the South China Sea can reach 900 Tcf with an annual production of 1.8 Tcf.\textsuperscript{10} Chinese geologists have recently detected 'super-thick' oil and gas-rich strata in the South China Sea and also identified 38 offshore oil and gas basins in the area.\textsuperscript{11}

Because of reported oil and gas resources, all claimants in the South China Sea have existing gas and oil exploration activities in the area.\textsuperscript{12} China has exploration project in Vanguard Bank, which is proximate to Indonesia's Natuna Gas Field. Vietnam has projects Dai Hung and Blue Dradon Fields that are adjacent to disputed territories in the South China Sea. The Philippines has natural gas power project in Malampaya, which is close to disputed Spratly group of islands. To establish a relationship of amity, China, the Philippines and Vietnam entered into Joint Marine Seismic Undertaking (JMSU) in 2005 to look for other oil and gas deposits in the South China Sea China. But the JMSU was allowed to lapse in 2008 due to domestic political and legal challenges in the Philippines.\textsuperscript{13} Philippine declaration of a New Baselines Law on 10 March 2009 and the deterioration of China-Vietnam relationship over the issue of Paracel Islands created a relationship of among the three claimants.

Malaysia, which controls disputed reefs located in oil rich portion of the South China Sea, has begun its natural gas production from Angsi Field that is expected to produce 65,000 b/d of oil and 450 MMscfd of gas. Brunei has exploration projects in Louisa Reef that is also being claimed by Malaysia. To avoid conflicts and create a relationship of amity, Brunei and Malaysia decided to enter into joint oil exploration projects in Louisa Reef. Brunei also explored the possibility of joint oil exploration with China considering that China buys an average of 20,000 barrels of oil daily from Brunei.\textsuperscript{14}

China has, in fact, recently announced its plan to step up oil and natural gas exploration in the South China Sea by spending an average of 500 million yuan ($75 million) a year in the next two decades in order to meet the country’s growing imported energy needs, which in 2010 reached 55 per cent of total domestic consumption.\textsuperscript{15} It is forecasted that 60% of China’s oil consumption will be imported by 2020 making gas and oil exploration in the South China Sea necessary to reduce dependence on oil imports.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{9} Global Security, “South “China Sea Oil and Natural Gas” at http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/spratly-oil.htm <accessed on 4 January 2011>.
\item \textsuperscript{10} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{12} See Craig Snyder, “The Implications of Hydrocarbon Developments in the South China Sea” at http://faculty.law.ubc.ca/scs/heyd.htm <accessed on 8 February 2011>.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Abigail Ho, “RP-China-Vietnam Exploration Deals on the Spratlys Lapses”, Philippine Daily Inquirer (11 July 2008).
\item \textsuperscript{14} Goh de No, “Brunei Open to Joint Exploration with China”, The Brunei Times (3 February 2011).
\item \textsuperscript{15} “China to Increase Expenditure on Oil, Gas Exploration”, The Nation (25 January 2011) at http://thenationonlineng.net/web3/business/energy/25742.html <accessed on 7 February 2011>.
\end{itemize}
Another growing issue is food security associated with fishing activities in these two bodies of water. Both seas are considered highly productive ecosystem with rich marine biodiversities and abundant fish resources. Fish and other marine resources are intensely exploited in the East and South China Sea. Overlapping claims to maritime boundaries result in overlapping fishing activities of parties involved in the territorial disputes. In fact, recent security tensions between China and Japan in the East China Sea began on 7 September 2010 when Japan detained the Captain of a Chinese fishing boat accused of ramming a Japanese Coast Guard ship. While the issue was settled when Japan was compelled to release the Captain, “disagreements between Japan and China (and Taiwan) over territorial and economic rights in the region underlie the dispute and will continue to trigger tension” and affect the regional security environment.

Fishing activities in the South China Sea have also been major sources of irritants among claimants as they accuse each other of illegal fishing and poaching in their internal waters. To justify the construction of facilities in their occupied territories, claimants even call these facilities “fishermen shelters”. Overlapping fishing activities in the South China Sea among claimants create constant tensions in the disputed water. Because of economic value of the South China Sea, all claimants, except Brunei, have invested their resources in their occupied territories to maintain and consolidate their physical presence and prove their effective occupation. Since the signing in 2002 of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, claimants have been engaged in a number of construction activities that aim to improve and fortify their military and civilian presence in their occupied areas.

China, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam have heavily invested their resources to erect solid and more stable structures in their occupied areas in the South China Sea. Philippine structures in its nine occupied territories remain modest and in the dismal stage of rapid deterioration. However, the Philippines occupy the most number of Islands (Kota, Lawak, Likas, Pag-Asa, Parola and Patag) that are vegetated and suitable for human habitation if properly developed. China does not occupy any island in the Spratlys. But its occupied reefs have solid and highly cemented structures equipped with military outposts, field guns, communication facilities and some have helipads. Majority of the areas occupied by Vietnam are also reefs that have solid three-storey buildings that are identical and armed with gun emplacements, ammunition dumps, spoon rest radars and gun emplacements. Vietnam’s Lagos Island has newly cemented runway. Though Taiwan only occupies one island, it is, however, the largest island in the Spratlys with the longest runway. Malaysia does not occupy any island like China.

---

17 Ibid.
18 For further discussions, see Rommel C. Banlaoi, “Recent Infrastructure Developments in the South China Sea: Towards Effective Occupation?” (7 January 2011) at http://declassifiedrommelbanlaoi.blogspot.com/2011/01/recent-infrastructure-developments-in.html <accessed on 8 February 2011>
But all Malaysian occupied reefs have impressive civilian and military facilities located in an area of huge oil and natural gas deposits. Moreover, its Swallow Reef called Layang-Layang is the most developed reef in the Spratlys with a highly cemented runway being used for tourism purposes. Brunei does not occupy any island or islet in the Spratlys.

In other words, there have been continuous facilities developments in the occupied features to protect not only their fishing rights but also to strengthen their territorial integrity. A long standing security issue in East and South China Sea, therefore, is **territorial security**. All claimants regard the contested features in these waters as integral part of their territories that they have to secure and defend.

The East China Sea is only composed of five uninhabited islets and three barren rocks with a total land area of only seven square kilometers. The South China Sea, on the other hand, is composed of around 250 islands, islets, reefs, shoals and barren rocks with an approximate land area of ten square kilometers. Though the East and South China Sea have very small land areas, all features there are significant because they can delimit maritime boundaries, generate an EEZ and define the extent of territorial water. Because these features touch the issue of territorial integrity, they agitate nationalist sentiments and encourage claimants to conduct military exercises around the contested waters.

One of the most salient issues in East and South China Sea is **maritime security**, particularly in the context of freedom of navigation and transnational security threats.

East and South China Sea is one of the busiest sea routes in the world considering that more than half of the world’s shipping activities pass through these two bodies of water. The East China Sea is the main shipping route from the South China Sea where more than 50,000 commercial ships sail through, not to mention 40 to 50 oil tankers passing through these areas daily. Thus, East and South China Sea serves as the lifeline for much of the global trade. Thus, freedom of navigation in East and South China Sea is in the fundamental interests not only of littoral states but also of other countries whose shipping routes pass through these busy bodies of water. Ships passing through the Malacca Strait, Sunda Strait, Lombok Strait, Sulo Sea and Celebes Sea continue on into the East and South China Sea. Any country gaining command of the East and South China by a unilateral use of force is therefore inimical not only to regional but also global maritime security. Because of its navigational importance, the East and South China is also highly vulnerable to many transnational security threats such as piracy, maritime terrorism and trafficking of drugs, arms and humans, which all affect the overall maritime security of the area.\(^{19}\) Piracy incidents, for example, have surged in the South China Sea with at least 30 attacks in 2010, a trend unimaginable before. The

---

growing nexus between piracy and terrorism in the 21st century compounds the maritime security concern in the area. Piracy and terrorism are also connected with human, drugs and arms trafficking in East Asia. Transnational security threats, therefore, warrant concerned states to cooperate rather to compete in order to guarantee the maritime security of East and South China Sea.

A concomitant security issue from all the aforementioned issues is military security. All parties and even outside stakeholders to the two territorial conflicts are enhancing their naval capabilities to defend what they consider as their territories not only against other claimants but also against transnational security threats.

While recent security tensions caused by territorial disputes over the South China Sea and the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands appear to be being managed because of various diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflicts peacefully, there are still many actual risks involved that shape the current security environment in the area. One risk is the current military development among the littoral states. All claimants are enhancing their naval capabilities to assert their sovereignties in the contested territories. Though Japan does not have a conventional Navy, it has a credible Maritime Self-Defence Force that has new maritime doctrines and capabilities to respond against new threats and various contingencies in East China Sea such as invasion of island areas or activities conducted by spy ships navigating in Japanese waters.

China is also engaged in a vigorous naval modernization program, which is currently affecting the current balance of naval power in the Asia Pacific. Though China’s sea power status is still considered below the level of the sea power status of the United States, China is rapidly developing powerful full-fledged blue water navy that can alter the status quo in East and South China Sea. With China’s long history of using military force to address domestic security challenges, its growing naval capabilities are being feared to be used in territorial disputes in East and South China Sea, though China’s use of force in these disputes has been very limited to date and is considered to be calibrated at present.

CHINA’S MILITARY RISE: MAJOR SOURCE OF MARITIME SECURITY DILEMMA IN EAST AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

With the aforementioned security issues getting high in the agenda of concerned states, the security environment in East and South China Sea is also currently tense and the tension may even rise if the maritime security dilemma in the area is not properly ameliorated.

Maritime security dilemma inevitably exists when military preparations of one state unnecessarily create an un-resolvable uncertainty in the mind of another state as to whether those preparations are for “defensive” or “offensive” purposes. With the general concept of security dilemma, states are trapped in a difficult “guessing game” situation where they desperately speculate on each others’ strategic intention whether it is benign or malign. States perceptions of security dilemma create a great paradox in which states arguably believe that their security requires the insecurity of others.

This very difficult situation undesirably occurs because of the anarchic nature of international system where there is the utter absence of an overarching authority that can effectively regulate and even tame the behavior of self-seeking sovereign states whose preoccupation is self-preservation. In an anarchic international environment, states constantly compete with one another to protect their highly cherished sovereignty and to pursue their deeply valued national interests. Though the state of anarchy can also encourage and motivate states to cooperate by building international regimes or constructing international norms necessary for international stability, mutual suspicions arguably continue to define the reality of international politics.

These mutual suspicions create an “action-reaction” dynamics that breed more feelings of insecurities. No matter how states convince their neighbors that they are benign, mutual suspicions unleash a perspective that a benign status can change and be more malign. Thus, security dilemma is a great tragedy because small armed conflicts or a full-scale war can possibly occur between and among states though none of them desire such an unintended tragic outcome.

28The concept of security dilemma as a tragedy was popularized by Herbert Butterfield. See Herbert Butterfield, History and Human Relations (London: Collins, 1951), pp. 6-20.
In East and South China Sea, China’s military rise has become the major source of maritime security dilemma as a result of many security uncertainties associated with this rise. China’s rapid and sustained economic growth gave the country the necessary wherewithal to support the strengthening and rise of its military. Though the United States military continues to be the most powerful and far-reaching military force in the larger Asia Pacific region, China has already enhanced its military capabilities to assertively protect its territorial interests not only in East and South China Sea but also elsewhere.

In fact, the current development of China’s military capabilities is becoming more and more maritime in orientation with the rapid expansion of its blue-water navy capability. The holding of China’s naval parade in April 2009 showcasing modern submarines and destroyers of the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) was apparent indication of the country’s desire to really create a powerful ocean-going navy. China’s on-going acquisition of an aircraft carrier is also a barometer of its sea power ambition in the 21st century. It has been argued that China’s aircraft carrier ambitions may be larger than the existing literature has predicted. China has conceived a maritime defense strategy based on “two-island chains”. The first island chain covers the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea and the South China Sea while the second island chain includes the Japan Sea, the Philippines Sea and the Indonesia Sea. China has already developed a capability to defend these two-island chains with a total acquisition of modern submarines, frigates, corvettes, and patrol ships, among others as well as development of an aircraft carrier and even a stealth fighter. It has also recently adopted a “Far Sea Defense” strategy, which can challenge the freedom of action of other major powers beyond the two island chains.

With growing naval power at its disposal, China can be more assertive in its sovereignty claims in East and South China Sea – something that can alter the status quo in these disputed waters and global maritime balance of power.

The September 2010 incident involving Japan and China over Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands demonstrated that with enhanced military capabilities, China could take a tougher diplomatic stance and stronger foreign policy posture. When Japan detained a Chinese fishing captain cruising within the territorial waters of Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, it generated a very strong reaction from the Chinese government, which demanded for

---

31 Ibid.
the release of the said captain. China even threatened to discontinue tourist exchanges and to cancel diplomatic meetings with Japan.\textsuperscript{32} China was able to assert its strong position on the said incident because of its growing global economic relevance or soft power) and increasing military capabilities or hard power. China’s impressive skills in using its soft and soft powers make it a certified smart power in the world.

Similar situation also occurred in the South China Sea when China apprehended the US Navy Ship Impeccable in March 2009 and declared the whole South China Sea region as part of China’s “core interests” at par with its interests in Taiwan, Tibet and even Xinjiang. China has increased its naval presence in the South China Sea by deploying several ships in the area. On 10 March 2009, China deployed its largest and most modern naval ship, Yuzheng 311, to patrol China’s exclusive economic zone and strengthen fishery administration in the South China Sea. The deployment of Yuzheng 311 to the South China Sea was an indication of China’s readiness to use its growing hard power when the difficult issue of sovereignty is at seriously stake.\textsuperscript{33} China has also deployed other ships in the South China Sea such as Yuzheng 45001, Haixun 31, and Yuzheng 44183. The deployment of these ships has aggravated the maritime security dilemma of China’s neighbors not only in Southeast Asia but also in the wider Asia Pacific region.

The existence of China’s new underground nuclear submarine base on the southern tip of Hainan Island, which close to vital sea lanes of navigation in Southeast Asia, has also raised enormous regional anxieties. Reports show that the Hainan base can accommodate 20 submarines “including a new type of nuclear ballistic missile submarine, and future Chinese aircraft carrier battle groups.”\textsuperscript{34} There is a view that this base aims to protect Chinese interests not only in the South China Sea but also in the East China Sea and the Taiwan Straits.

It is therefore argued that China already has the wherewithal to flex its military muscles in East and South China Sea promoting neighboring states to react by also upgrading their naval capabilities. All claimants in the South China Sea, with the exemption of Brunei, have been strengthening their civilian and military presence in their occupied areas to establish effective occupation and thereby strengthen their sovereignty claims. Claimants have also engaged in several infrastructure developments and facilities developments in their occupied areas to assert their position.

\textsuperscript{32} For a good analysis of the incident, see Sun-won Park, “The East China Sea Dispute: Short-Term Victory and Long-Term Loss for China?”, \textit{Brookings Paper} (1 November 2010).
Other claimants have also implemented naval modernization programs to bolster their claims with military means. Malaysia acquired in October 2009 2 Scorpene Class submarines to bolster its capability to guard its waters. Vietnam, on the other hand, ordered in 2007 two Gepard Class frigates from Russia. Vietnam also explored the procurement of six Kilo Class submarines from Russia to increase its maritime capabilities. Indonesia also planned to construct 12 additional submarines by 2024 and considering the Chanbogo Class submarines from South Korea or Kilo Class submarines from Russia. While Thailand acknowledged the deterrent value of acquiring submarines and expressed no plan to acquire submarines arguing that “deploying a submarine would heighten tensions” with neighbors, it is currently, however, considering acquiring one and has joined the submarine acquisition dynamics in Southeast Asia.

Though still financially challenged to acquire modern naval ships (never mind submarines), the Philippines acquired in May 2009 three multi-purpose attack crafts to be deployed not in the South China Sea but in the waters of Sulu, Basilan and Tawi-Tawi. As part of Philippine naval modernization project, the Department of National Defence (DND) also ordered in May 2010 to rush the acquisition of two multi-role vessels from either Singapore or South Korea. The Philippine Navy underscores, however, that its recent acquisitions are meant to ameliorate the security dilemma by increasing Philippine naval capacity to promote maritime security cooperation in Southeast Asian rather than compete with its neighbors. In its Naval Modernization Program, the Philippine Navy does not have the intention to acquire submarines.

Recent developments in East and South China Sea have also encouraged major powers to react. Australia released a Defense White Paper in 2009 saying that China’s growing military might is a serious regional security concern. It also encouraged the US to reiterate its long standing position that the security situation in the South China Sea is vital for the freedom of navigation, which is essential for the pursuance of American security interests in the region. India has also raised concerns on China’s assertiveness in East and South China prompting a retired Indian General to urge China “to exercise extreme caution in its interactions with other countries.” The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has, in fact, welcome India’s concerns to check China in these troubled waters considering that the security situation in East and South China Sea also has implications for the security of the Indian Ocean. Russia is also a significant

---

stakeholder and has comprehensive interests in the security of East and South China Sea considering its proximity with the Russian Far East. The Russian Navy is even assisting Vietnam in the reconstruction of Cam Ran Bay as a naval base and this can support the activities of Russian Pacific Fleet. Needless to say, Japan stakes in the security and stability of East and South China Sea are vital for the pursuance of its national interests.

AMELIORATING MARITIME SECURITY DILEMMA IN EAST AND SOUTH CHINA SEA: A NEW COMPREHENSIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH CHINA

The military rise of China has become a major source of maritime security dilemma in East and South China Sea. China’s growing military power affects the current security situation in East and South China Sea. To ameliorate the security dilemma and maintain peace and stability in the region, it essential for concerned states to comprehensively engage rather than isolate or gang-up against China.

Comprehensively engaging China is not exactly something new. As early as the 1990s, the idea of comprehensively engaging China was already raised in various academic forums and official meetings. It was even advocated by former US President Bill Clinton.

But the idea of a new comprehensive engagement is necessary to grapple with the military rise of China that has become more real now than previously imagined. Before, the world was just talking about the general idea of China’s military ascendancy. Now, the world is now talking about China’s acquisition of an aircraft carrier, something that will be realized sooner rather than later. China’s development of a stealth fighter is currently attracting international attention. All these developments make China a de facto global power that must be engaged rather than be isolated from the current international norms.

What does it mean comprehensively engaging China to ameliorate the maritime security dilemma in East and South China Sea?

A key to ameliorating security dilemma is to reduce if not totally eradicate mutual suspicions. This can only be accomplished through a long, difficult and even costly process of socializations and interactions in various issue areas. This is what comprehensive engagement is all about – a process of deliberately constructing good and friendly relations among states, particularly with a rising power that has the potential to alter the regional and international status quo. Comprehensive engagement is a process that aims to integrate China into the existing rule-based,
institutionalized, and normative international system. It is also a process of socializing China in the construction of regional and global norms that are comfortable and acceptable not only to China but also to fellow members of the international community.

Through comprehensive engagement, good and productive ties can be forged between China and its neighbors in East and South China Sea, which are all yearning for peace, stability and prosperity. Comprehensive engagement, which is multilevel, multidimensional and far sighted, is essential to ameliorate the maritime security dilemma associated with China’s military rise. Its main goal is to build bridges of cooperation with China so it can embrace a role as responsible stakeholder of regional and global security, something that China also wants for itself.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The East and South China Sea is currently tense because of unresolved territorial claims and maritime boundary disputes. The area has become a source of renewed inter-state rivalries because the disputes have become closely associated with interrelated issues of energy security, food security, territorial security, maritime security and military security. All these issues have intensified the maritime security dilemma not only of littoral states but also other major powers and stakeholders.

But the major source of maritime security dilemma in East and South China Sea is the military rise of China. From an economic power, China is fast becoming a sea power that can alter the balance of military power in the Asia Pacific. Ameliorating the maritime security dilemma associated with the military rise of China is essential for regional peace, stability and prosperity. Comprehensive engagement is deemed necessary to develop good and friendly relations with China so its rise will not be inimical to regional and global security.

---