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In a Fortnight

ANTI-PRIVILEGE CAMPAIGN HITS THE CHINESE MIDDLE CLASS

By Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga and David Cohen

On September 4, China's State Council announced a series of ambitious and wide-reaching reforms of the Chinese college admissions system, designed to increase fairness and reduce pressure on China's high school students. China's infamous college admissions test, the *gaokao*, will be restructured, replacing a single high-pressure examination at the end of senior year with a series of tests spread out over the three years of high school ([State Council](#), September 4). The reforms are focused on increasing equality and fairness by allocating more spaces to underrepresented students from rural areas and inland provinces. This reform is likely to be the most public-facing component of a wide-ranging effort by the Xi Jinping administration to address perceptions of elite privilege and social inequality. Yet, the reforms face challenges from an entrenched system and eager middle-class parents who will resist changes to the redistribution of opportunities for advancement.

The reforms follow years of experimentation with smaller policy changes that have allowed elite universities to develop their own admissions policies (*zhezhu zhaosheng*),

enabling some students to bypass the *gaokao* entirely. Some of these policies, especially preferential admissions for students deemed to have special athletic and artistic abilities, have been perceived as corrupt and will be reined in by the new reforms. Past high-profile cases include parents buying certificates for sports talent—40,000 RMB (\$6,500) for soccer, 80,000 RMB (\$13,000) for swimming—and a Party member who falsely registered his son as a member of an ethnic minority, in order to take advantage of affirmative action policies ([Sohu](#), July 3; [Xinhua](#), July 30, 2009).

As the main avenue for social advancement in China, college admissions are the subject of intense attention by high school students and concerned parents. Extremely low acceptance rates, coupled with the fact that spaces at elite universities are allocated based on provincial quotas and favor locals, mean that parents frequently begin strategizing for their children's education before they are born. News about test scores required for elite universities and details of the annual *gaokao* frequently appear on the front pages of Chinese newspapers. So unequal is this system that one Chinese commentator calculated a student from Beijing is approximately 41 times more likely to enter Peking University, China's top school, compared to a student from the densely-populated and inland Anhui province ([Taipei Times](#), July 4, 2012). This represents a roughly 0.01 percent acceptance rate for Anhui students, far below Harvard University's 5.9 percent acceptance rate for 2014.

A Fairness Agenda?

Chinese President Xi Jinping has devoted much of his term to the threat posed by such forms of basic unfairness to the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) legitimacy, launching a series of political campaigns to curtail the privileges of Party insiders. In addition to a wide-ranging wave of corruption arrests, he has lectured cadres about flaunting signs of wealth, limiting the use of official cars, forbidding banqueting and discouraging expensive presents. Xi also repeatedly reminds cadres that the survival of the Party depends upon their maintaining good "work styles" (see [China Brief](#), August 23, 2013). This week, the rule against presents has resulted in remarkably low sales of mooncakes—down 50 percent in some cities—during the Mid-Autumn Festival ([China Daily](#), September 5). The education reforms have a thematic

connection to the issue of fairness. However, unlike Xi's political campaigns, they will directly affect non-Party members and have been announced by a state body.

The State Council document and official commentaries published in *People's Daily* and *China Youth Daily* heavily emphasize fairness, equality and public justice as the main goals of the reform ([People's Daily](#), September 5; [China Youth Daily](#), September 5). The document stresses the government's responsiveness to public concerns, referring to "issues that elicit a strong reaction from society," and seeks to "make education satisfactory for the people." The document also touts a "sunshine project," promising to increase transparency "to release everything that can be released," and specifically mentions providing more information about high-profile disciplinary actions and application procedures.

The State Council document sets two overarching targets: First, narrowing the gap between admissions of rural and urban students to all universities, and second, addressing the larger inequalities in admissions to elite universities. To accomplish these goals, the document calls for the following reforms:

- Universities, especially universities on China's east coast, will improve the admissions rates for students from inland and western provinces, as well as minority autonomous regions, currently the most disadvantaged in the admissions system. This will also reduce preferential treatment for local students. By 2017, the State Council aims to reduce the overall gap between the provinces with the lowest admissions rates compared to the national average from the current 6 percent (76 percent versus 70 percent of applicants) to 4 percent.
- Elite universities will establish quotas for exceptional students from rural, poor and ethnic minority areas. No specific targets have been announced, only a desire for a "noticeable increase."
- The document also calls for improving the provision of primary and secondary education to the children of migrant laborers, but does not provide any specifics.

- In addition, special admissions policies will be severely curtailed, but not fully eliminated. Affirmative action for minority students will be retained, but separate admissions tracks for students certified as talented athletes or artists will be eliminated and all students will be required to take the *gaokao*.

People's Daily stated the reform was a “difficult balance between fairness and objectivity [*kexue*]” and specifies that the reforms are a response to public dissatisfaction, but allows that the reforms will not please everyone and will “touch upon the interests of every family” (*People's Daily*, September 5).

Other Goals

While fairness (*gongping*) is clearly the main focus—mentioned seven times in the document—it also promises to reduce pressure on students and ties the goal to Xi Jinping’s marquee “China Dream” by stressing the role of human capital in “the great revival of the Chinese people.”

The reforms are also intended to improve the overall health of the student by reducing pressure and ensuring a well-rounded education. The document refers to the current system as “a single test that determines one’s whole life” and alludes to the excessive competitive pressure. These measures include spreading out the required exams for college admissions to three years and allowing students to choose three of their six test subjects. While not described in the main document, Vice Minister of Education Liu Limin was quoted on China Radio suggesting that colleges may begin considering students’ moral character (*pinde*) and extracurricular activities in addition to “ice-cold scores” (*China Radio*, September 7). In addition to relieving pressure on students by not focusing entirely on *gaokao* scores, this also injects a subjective assessment of students’ personal activities into the college admissions process, which could yet again allow for corruption. Furthermore, if implemented, this would certainly benefit most those students who participate in the Communist Youth League or other state-approved organizations.

Murky Politics

The politics of this reform are quite mysterious—no senior leaders appear to have taken ownership of the policy or have been mentioned in news coverage. However, the emphasis on fairness and reducing perceptions of privilege reflect Xi’s agenda. On the other hand, the emphasis on rural-urban and coastal-inland inequality suggests ties to former president Hu Jintao’s legacy of “harmonious society.” The most conspicuous absence among senior leaders is Premier Li Keqiang, who is associated with Hu’s faction and leads the State Council. He played a highly public role in the rollout of a large-scale State Council urbanization policy last year, and it is unclear why his name would not be attached to this one (see *China Brief*, September 27, 2013).

While this reform, if successful, could certainly address a major source of resentment in Chinese society, gains for rural and poor students will necessarily come at a cost for middle class families from major cities. College admissions are a zero-sum game. However, the elite and privileged members of the Party will likely remain relatively unaffected, as they will either continue to influence college admissions through more direct avenues or simply send their children abroad, like Xi’s daughter, who attended Harvard for part of her college education.

Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga and David Cohen are the incoming and outgoing editors of China Brief.

Power to the Provinces: The Devolution of China's Maritime Rights Protection

By Ryan D. Martinson

In March 2013, China passed legislation integrating four of its five maritime law enforcement (MLE) agencies into the newly-created China Coast Guard, under the State Oceanic Administration (SOA) (see also [China Brief](#), March 28, 2013). [1] This decision, long called for by people both in and out of the Chinese government, was intended to improve coordination and reduce redundancies at the central government level. Chinese observers immediately placed it in the context of Beijing's efforts to improve its ability to enforce China's maritime claims in Asia. They hoped the formerly independent agencies would come together "to form a fist out of fingers," creating synergistic effects that would strengthen China's administrative control over disputed waters.

This centralization, very much a work in progress, has overshadowed another organizational development well worth noting. Until recently, maritime rights protection (MRP)—or using law enforcement as a means of defending and advancing China's position in its maritime disputes—fell almost entirely within the responsibility of China's central-level MLE bureaucracies. Since roughly 2010, the MLE forces of China's eleven coastal provinces and provincial-level cities, formerly content to hug the coast in boats and small ships, have increasingly put to sea in large-displacement cutters and sailed to troubled waters for the stated purpose of confronting "illegal" foreign activities. This development has noteworthy repercussions for both China and the other states of maritime Asia.

The Old Division of Labor

The advent of United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS), which China ratified in 1996, created the impetus to establish a new central-level maritime agency, one operating large-displacement ships capable of patrolling new zones of jurisdiction hundreds of nautical miles from the coast. The need for such an organization was especially acute given that China's views on coastal state rights to administer exclusive economic zones (EEZs) differs from the United States, among others, and China is party to numerous disputes

involving sovereignty over islands and maritime boundary demarcation. Thus, in October 1998, China established the China Marine Surveillance (CMS), under the SOA, with the primary mission of safeguarding China's maritime rights and interests.

The CMS initially consisted of three central-level departments: a North Sea Department in Qingdao, an East Sea Department in Shanghai and a South Sea Department in Guangzhou. Each of these departments managed three to four divisions, located at different cities within departmental jurisdiction. Aside from enforcing environmental protection laws, the chief focus of these units was to perform *weiquan zhibifa*—literally, law enforcement for the purpose of rights protection. In the first years of the CMS's existence, this primarily meant monitoring and sometimes obstructing foreign activities within China's EEZs, which it did on the legal basis of the Provisions of the People's Republic of China on Administration of Foreign-related Marine Scientific Research (1996) and the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Exclusive Economic Zone and the Continental Shelf (1998). These laws assert China's interpretation of its rights under UNCLOS to regulate foreign scientific activities within China's EEZ and are frequently cited as justification for objecting to foreign surveillance in these waters.

Over time, MRP missions evolved to include patrolling disputed waters. Sometimes these patrols were declaratory in nature, a mission captured by the Chinese phrase "show presence, manifest jurisdiction and declare sovereignty." Eventually, however, MLE forces began conducting operations to forcibly deny other states and their citizens use of the sea and assert Chinese rights. For a decade after the founding of the CMS, these missions fell under the exclusive purview of central-level units. For example, the task force charged with safeguarding Chinese surveying activities near the Paracel Islands from Vietnamese obstruction in June 2007 comprised vessels drawn from the East Sea and South Sea Departments. CMS 46 and CMS 51, both belonging to the East Sea Department, took part in China's first administrative patrol of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in December 2008. CMS 75 and CMS 84, the first to arrive at Scarborough Shoal to confront the Philippine Navy's *Gregorio del Pilar* in April 2012, both belonged to the South Sea Department.

Until 2010, all new large-displacement ship construction went to central-level departments. In 1999, the State

Council approved plans to build 13 new large ($\geq 1,000$ tonnes) CMS cutters in two phases. The Phase One ships, six total, were evenly distributed to CMS's three central-level departments in 2005. The Phase Two ships, seven total, joined the three departments in 2010–11. This preference applied to second-hand transfers as well: The 11 former Chinese Navy ships transferred to the CMS in 2012 all ended up at central-level units ([Renminwang](#), January 1, 2013).

While central government units conducted foreign policy in blue water, coastal provinces and provincial-level cities performed the CMS's second core mission, environmental protection. This primarily meant managing coastal development: preventing illegal exploitation of coastal resources (sand, stone, etc.) and curbing unauthorized discharge of pollutants into the sea. Their organizations mirrored those of the central government, with a provincial-level department overseeing several divisions. The provincial-level units mostly operated boats and small ships. Despite the obvious importance of the environmental protection mission, coastal provinces did not relish investing in these forces. As late as 2003, three coastal provinces—Guangxi, Hainan and Shanghai—still had not set up the relevant CMS departments. [2]

China's other important MRP agency, the Fisheries Law Enforcement Commission (FLEC), had a very similar division of labor. It comprised three central government-administered departments—the Yellow/Bohai Sea Department, the East China Sea Department and the South China Sea Department. They owned and operated FLEC's oceangoing cutters. They also performed MRP missions such as escorting Chinese fishermen to disputed waters in the South China Sea and conducting declaratory patrols to the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. At the same time, each province operated its own FLEC units, which enforced fisheries law on and near the shore, rarely venturing into blue water.

Power to the Provinces

In 2009, the SOA began taking steps to alter this longstanding division of labor. It encouraged provincial-level CMS departments to play a more active role in MRP activities. The impetus for this decision may have been the central government's desire for the coastal provinces—the prime beneficiaries of access to the sea—to assume some of the financial burdens of MRP. In 2009, provincial-level forces from Guangdong, Liaoning and Guangxi

began conducting MRP operations. [3] Provincial-level FLEC units began making regular MRP patrols at about the same time: The 500 tonne FLEC cutters operated by Hainan, Guangxi and Guangdong led the way, operating near the Spratly Islands in 2010.

Most provincial-level CMS and FLEC departments, however, were ill-equipped to participate in MRP activities. They invariably operated small ships, which have poor endurance and are vulnerable to high seas. Moreover, in MRP efforts, size matters for another reason—larger ships are more intimidating.

The central government took a major step towards addressing the material limitations of the provincial-level fleets in 2010. In the wake of Japan's detention of a Chinese fishing boat captain near the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in September 2010, China announced plans to help provincial-level CMS departments procure a total of 36 new cutters, dwarfing the combined output of Phase One and Phase Two projects. This new plan comprised 14 600-tonne cutters, 15 1,000-tonne cutters and seven 1,500-tonne cutters ([China Ocean News](#), December 21, 2010). Chinese shipbuilders delivered the first of these, a 1,000 tonne ship belonging to Fujian, in February 2013. Most have or will be delivered by the end of 2014. Some have China Coast Guard colors/pennant numbers, while others have CMS colors/pennant numbers. Provincial-level fisheries law enforcement departments have also taken the cue. Guangxi will soon receive a pair of fisheries law enforcement ships, each displacing 1,764 tonnes. These vessels, identified as FLEC 45005 and FLEC 45013, will primarily conduct MRP patrols in the Gulf of Tonkin, the Paracel Islands and the Spratly Islands ([China Ocean News](#), June 5).

The provinces frequently cite the primary function of these new vessels: protecting China's maritime rights and interests against foreign encroachment. The ships that have already reached the fleets are doing precisely this. For instance, on its maiden voyage in July 2013, CCG 2113, a Jiangsu ship, pursued and verbally harassed the *Impeccable*, a U.S. Navy surveillance vessel ([China Ocean News](#), February 21; [Youtube](#), July 3, 2013). This was a separate reported episode from the well-known 2009 incident, when the U.S. government accused the Chinese military of nearly causing a collision. In April 2013, CCG 2112, a Fujian vessel, did sentry duty at the Second Thomas Shoal, the site of the dilapidated remains of the *Sierra Madre*, a vessel grounded by the Philippines government in 1999 that still

Large Displacement ($\geq 1,000$ tonne) Provincial-level Rights Protection Cutters

#	Pennant #	Province	Displacement	Delivered
1	CCG 2115	Fujian	1,750t	2014
2	CCG 2112	Fujian	1,300t	2013
3	CMS 9010	Guangdong	1,500t	2014
4	CCG 3111	Guangdong	1,000t	2013
5	CCG 3112	Guangdong	1,000t	2013
6	CCG 3113	Guangxi	1,000t	2013
7	FLEC 45005	Guangxi	1,764t	2014
8	FLEC 45013	Guangxi	1,764t	2014
9	CMS 2168	Hainan	1,300t	2013
10	CMS 2169	Hainan	1,300t	2013
11	CMS 2032	Hebei	1,300t	2013
12	CCG 2113	Jiangsu	1,000t	2013
13	CMS 1001	Liaoning	1,000t	2014
14	CMS 1002	Liaoning	1,000t	2014
15	CMS 1010	Liaoning	1,500t	2014
16	CMS 1013	Liaoning	1,000t	2014
17	CMS 4001	Shandong	1,300t	2014
18	CMS 4002	Shandong	1,300t	2014
19	CMS 3015	Tianjin	1,500t	2014
20	CMS 7008	Zhejiang	1,500t	2014

* **Bold** = expected delivery.

hosts a small garrison of Philippine marines (*China Ocean News*, April 4). Guangdong's CCG 3111 and 3112 have been described as a "models" for provincial-level ships taking part in these missions: Since their commissioning in mid-2013, both have completed MRP operations in the East China Sea and the South China Sea (*China Ocean News*, June 13).

In the coming years, developments in Hainan will merit special attention. Much of the two million square kilometers of maritime territory claimed by China in the South China Sea falls under Hainan's jurisdiction, which thus overlaps with waters claimed by other countries. In the past, Hainan has generally ceded administration to central-level FLEC and CMS units. However, recent events—the elevation of Sansha on Woody Island to a prefecture-level city in July 2012, Hainan's receipt of two large-displacement law enforcement cutters in 2013, its lobbying for central government support to further expand its fleet and new provincial-level fisheries "measures" taking effect in 2014—suggest that the province could assume a much bigger MRP role in the

South China Sea (*China Ocean News*, January 20).

Implications

In the last several years, the central government has encouraged and empowered coastal provinces to take part in blue water rights protection patrols, a mission once only performed by central-level units, and the provinces have answered the call with great alacrity. This development has noteworthy implications for China's use of MLE forces as an instrument of statecraft.

First, this trend clearly undermines Beijing's push for greater centralized control over MLE activities that prompted the reforms of 2013. Central-level SOA and FLEC bureaucracies provide "guidance" to the provincial-level departments, a delicate relationship given that the provinces own the ships and bear operating and maintenance costs (*Nanfang Zhoumo*, February 21). Planning almost certainly involves a process of negotiation between the center, which focuses on the larger strategic value of enforcing territorial claims, and the provinces, which prioritize local concerns over patrolling distant

disputed islands with no direct benefit to the provincial governments. The intricacies of the central/province relationship, however, are difficult to discern. The diffusion of provincial-level rights protection units is no doubt leading to wasteful redundancies. Moreover, coordination between central-level and provincial-level units is probably hampered by incompatible standards, practices and equipment. [4] The SOA recognizes the problems with the central/province relationship. In January 2014, SOA Director Liu Cigui presented a report at the National Maritime Work Meeting, in which he highlighted the need to “research the related problems of how to organically link up reform within the coastal province CMS forces with integration of central-level maritime law enforcement forces” (*China Ocean News*, January 17).

Second, patrolling disputed waters or tracking foreign surveillance ships in China’s EEZs is not mere law enforcement—the units that conduct these missions are in fact implementing foreign policy. The devolution of power described above, therefore, also implies a devolution of foreign policy prerogatives from the central government to the provinces. To what extent are China’s coastal provinces equipped to perform this important function? With the best mariners seeking employment within central-level units, the provinces probably do not attract and keep the best talent. This problem is especially acute since China’s MRP law enforcement has an unsatisfactory baseline level of professionalism (*China Ocean News*, July 10). It is unclear how this might impact front line MRP operations. On the one hand, poor training could lead to lapses of restraint, increasing uncertainty and the risks that provincial-level ships might drag Beijing into an unplanned diplomatic or even military standoff with another claimant. However, inadequate experience and preparation could just as easily increase Chinese crews’ susceptibility to fear and intimidation, and weaken Beijing’s push to enforce its claims. At the very least, it will add a new element of unpredictability to encounters at sea that Beijing may or may not have intended.

Finally, the new provincial-level cutters reaching the fleets probably represent the leading edge of what is likely a massive effort to build the world’s largest oceangoing MLE fleet. What currently looks like an imbalance in favor of provincial-level MRP is probably temporary, a quiet period during which Chinese engineers design

and Chinese shipwrights build a new generation of central-level ships. In 2012, the SOA put into motion a plan to build many new 3,000 tonne and 4,000 tonne cutters, the fruits of which began reaching the central government MLE fleets in early 2014. News of new large-displacement orders in 2013 and 2014—including at least one super-large, 10,000 tonne displacement vessel—suggest that there are many, many more ships to be built ([Renminwang](#), January 17, 2013; CSIC, January 14).

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Notes

1. These included the China Marine Surveillance, the Maritime Police of the Border Control Department, the Fisheries Law Enforcement and the Maritime Anti-Smuggling Police of the General Administration of Customs.
2. Zhang Hongsheng, “Zongjie Jingyan, Dadan Kaituo,” *Haiyang Fazhan Yu Guanli*, January 2003, p. 29.
3. *China’s Ocean Development Report* (2013), Ocean Press, Beijing, 2013, p. 533.
4. Chen Yide, Ma Weijun and Yang Changjian, “Xin xingshi xia zuohao huyu weiquan weiwen gongzuo de sikao yu jianyi,” *Zhongguo Shuichan*, March 2012, p. 14.

Undocumented Uyghur Migrants Find New Route to Southeast Asia

By Jacob Zenn

Since 2013, increasing numbers of Uyghurs from Xinjiang Province have attempted to migrate illegally through China's South Asian neighbors—Burma, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia—to Thailand and then Malaysia, often with the hope of flying to Turkey. This trend marks a change from the 1990s and mid-2000s, when disaffected Uyghurs most often left Xinjiang through Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan in Central Asia. The cooperation of Central Asian governments with Chinese authorities in extraditing undocumented Uyghurs, especially dissidents, likely spurred Uyghurs to abandon that migration route in favor of Southeast Asia in recent years.

The uptick in migration to Southeast Asia coincides with rising levels of violence in Xinjiang since 2013. In July 2014, militants assassinated Jume Tahir, the pro-Chinese Communist Party (CCP) head imam in Kashgar, only two days after 100 people were killed in an attack in nearby Yarkand (*South China Morning Post* [SCMP], July 30). There have also been terrorist attacks by Uyghur militants in China that were praised by the Pakistan-based and Uyghur-led Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), including a car bombing in Beijing in October 2013; a mass stabbing in Kunming, Yunnan Province, which borders Burma and Laos, in March; and suicide and car bombings in Urumqi in May. Like the earlier groups of Uyghurs who migrated to Central Asia in the 1990s, many of the more recent groups of Uyghur migrants to Southeast Asia appear to have been connected to the ongoing violence in Xinjiang, thus spurring their decision to leave.

This article reviews the reasons behind the migration of Uyghurs to Central Asia in the 1990s and mid-2000s and the more recent trend of migration to Southeast Asia. The article also analyzes the likelihood of this trend to continue and the security and geopolitical effects of Uyghur migration to Southeast Asia on China and its relations with Southeast Asian countries.

Background

After the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, the five newly independent Central Asian countries—

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan—had minimal capacity to regulate cross-border migration. Uyghurs who were dissidents because of their participation in “separatist” uprisings or who sought economic opportunities outside of Xinjiang were able to cross illegally into Central Asia with relative ease. The human geography of Central Asia also made it an attractive destination for Xinjiang's Uyghurs: Southeastern Kazakhstan and northeastern Kyrgyzstan have indigenous Uyghur communities; Uyghur language is mutually intelligible with Uzbek and similar to Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Turkmen; and from 1996 until the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the Taliban allowed Sunni Muslims to enter the country without formal documentation (about 99 percent of Uyghurs are Sunni Muslims).

The biographies of Uyghurs who were captured by U.S. and Pakistani forces in Pakistan in 2001 and 2002 and transferred to Guantanamo Bay illustrate the motives and methods of the migration patterns during the 1990s (the biographies were made available via leaked State Department cables). For example:

- Adel Noori took part in the “Baren uprising” in 1990, after which he used a false name to obtain a Chinese passport and fly to Tashkent, Uzbekistan. [1] On the advice of a friend, he planned to travel to Afghanistan. From Tashkent, a contact helped him travel to Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, where he obtained an Iranian visa and traveled to Mashad, Iran. The ethnic Uzbek owner of a hotel in Mashad took Noori to the Afghan border, where the Taliban let him into the country and he stayed during the late 1990s. Noori lived at a safe house in Kabul and trained with firearms until the U.S. invasion in 2001. After he crossed into Pakistan, he was arrested at a Tablighi Jamaat center in Rawalpindi (JTF Gitmo Detainee Assessment, [Wikileaks](#)).
- Abdal Razak Qadir left Xinjiang to conduct business in Kyrgyzstan in 1995. Kyrgyz border guards detected his forged passport and sent him back to Xinjiang, where he was detained for two weeks by Chinese authorities. After obtaining a real passport, Qadir went to

Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and finally Pakistan to pursue business opportunities for several years in the late 1990s. Qadir did not succeed in Pakistan, so he traveled to meet Uyghurs in Kabul, Afghanistan, who recommended he visit the home of Hassan Mahsum, a Uyghur militant leader. Although Mahsum was not there, Abdul Haq al-Turkitani, who would later become Mahsum's successor, met Qadir and sent him to Tora Bora, Afghanistan, where he became a supplier of goods to militant camps. In January 2002, Qadir was arrested with 18 other Uyghurs and Arabs at a mosque near the Afghan-Pakistani border (JTF Gitmo Detainee Assessment, [Wikileaks](#)).

- Ahmad Muhammad Yaqub left Xinjiang in 1994 because of dissatisfaction with Xinjiang's agricultural policies and traveled with 50 Uyghurs to Kyrgyzstan. In Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, the Chinese embassy urged his group to return to China, but Yaqub did not return. Yaqub traveled to Kazakhstan in 1995 and then flew through Turkey to Cairo, Egypt to study for two years. In 1997, Yaqub returned to Kyrgyzstan, where a Turkmen neighbor provided Yaqub with Iranian and Afghan visas and advised him to travel to a militant camp in Afghanistan, which was led by Abdul Haq al-Turkistani and where "one could learn about the Koran, Uyghur culture, national identity and weapons." In December 2001, Yaqub was captured along the Afghan-Pakistan border with a group believed to be led by al-Qaeda leader Abu Yahya al-Libi (JTF Gitmo Detainee Assessment, [Wikileaks](#)).

After the late 1990s, it became more difficult for Uyghurs to travel to Central Asia. China's security, economic and political influence was increasing in the region, including through the Shanghai Five (renamed the Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO] in 2001). This led Central Asian governments to begin complying with China's demand to extradite suspected Uyghur militants and dissidents. After 2001, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan also labeled several Uyghur organizations "terrorist groups." After 2001, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan also labeled several Uyghur organizations "terrorist groups."

In 2003, the East Turkistan Liberation Organization (ETLO), the main Uyghur-led militant group operating in Central Asia and Turkey, also announced it was abandoning armed struggle to become a political movement amid pressure from the U.S. Global War on Terror ([BBC Chinese](#), September 30, 2005). The next wave of undocumented Uyghur migration as a result of violent incidents in the late 2000s therefore shifted from Central Asia to China's borderlands with Southeast Asia.

Southeast Asia Migration

Starting in 2009, hundreds of Uyghurs without documentation began seeking refuge in Southeast Asia. The main catalyst was the July 2009 inter-ethnic clashes in Urumqi, which saw several hundred Uyghurs and Han Chinese killed and hundreds of Uyghurs arrested. Soon after, the first instances of large numbers of Uyghurs migrating to Southeast Asia occurred:

- In December 2009, 20 Uyghurs who fled to Cambodia via Vietnam with the help of Christian non-governmental organizations were deported to China on the day before then-Vice President Xi Jinping's visit to Phnom Penh ([Asia Times](#), January 20, 2010). One other Uyghur "escaped" to Laos, but was arrested in March 2010 when his wife and five children arrived at the airport to meet him ([Phnom Penh Post](#), December 19, 2010). Two other Uyghurs from this group were detained by Vietnamese authorities, but went "missing" after escaping their holding cell ([Radio Free Asia](#), December 10, 2009).
- In January 2010, Burma deported 17 Uyghurs at the Chinese border crossing in Yunnan ([Sina](#), January 20, 2010).
- In August 2011, Malaysia deported 11 Uyghur men, who the government accused of being "members of a human trafficking syndicate." Several of the remaining Uyghurs from that group were later deported in 2013 before CCP Politburo Standing Committee member Jia Qinglin's visit to the country ([Sydney Morning Herald](#), August 23, 2011).

Although from 2009 to 2011 Southeast Asia proved no more hospitable to Uyghur migrants than Central Asia, migration to the region continued. One possible reason for this continued trend was the highly publicized case of Ershidin Israil, a Uyghur schoolteacher who reported on the July 2009 riots for Radio Free Asia and then fled to Kazakhstan ([Fergana](#), June 7, 2011). Although the UN High Commissioner for Refugees designated Israil as a refugee, he was detained by Chinese security forces in a Kazakh border town in 2011 and taken back to Xinjiang with Kazakhstan's permission, thus making the Central Asia option less appealing to prospective Uyghur migrants.

With the increase in violence in Xinjiang in 2013, another wave of migration to Southeast Asia started. In 2014, for example, cases of undocumented Uyghurs in Southeast Asia included:

- In March, more than 300 Uyghurs, including women and children, were detained along with Burmese Rohingyas at a human trafficking camp in Hat Yai, Thailand near the Malaysian border ([Phuket Wan](#), March 24).
- Also in March, 15 Uyghurs were arrested at the Thai border with Cambodia among a group of more than 100 migrants ([Phnom Penh Post](#), March 27).
- In April, 16 Uyghurs, including 10 men, four women and two children, were detained after a violent clash in Vietnam in which five Uyghurs and two Vietnamese security officers were killed after the Uyghurs entered Vietnam from Guangxi, China ([Nongnghiep](#), April 18).

In addition to these incidents, the ten-person group of Uyghurs who carried out a mass stabbing in Kunming in March 2014, killing 29 people, had reportedly been denied entry into Vietnam and Laos. This reportedly drove them to carry out the attack in Kunming as “retaliation” ([BBC](#), March 5). This group was also reportedly connected to an incident in Hotan, Xinjiang on June 28, 2013, in which 15 Uyghurs were killed after the police broke up an anti-government sermon at a mosque and arrested the imam, which led to riots in the local town square ([Radio Free Asia](#), June 30).

While details about other Uyghur migrant groups have not been released publicly, it appears that many of the Uyghurs migrating to Southeast Asia were also involved with, or at least affected by, violence in Xinjiang, which prompted their decision to leave China. It is also clear that their ultimate destination is Turkey, which would not only provide refuge from the violence in Xinjiang but also offer Uyghurs employment opportunities and support networks from the Uyghur civil society organizations and Muslim support networks in the country. However, there has been only one reported instance of undocumented Uyghurs successfully reaching Turkey in recent months, in which a group of 30 arrived and settled in the country. This suggests that most Uyghurs in the recent wave of migration did not succeed ([Today's Zaman](#), May 7).

Conclusion

From the 1990s to the present, undocumented Uyghurs and Uyghur dissidents have shifted their migration routes from Central Asia to Southeast Asia. Southeast Asian countries, however, have proved to be no more lenient than Central Asian countries toward these migrants and still extradite Uyghurs to China. There are relatively few reports of Uyghurs making it to Turkey from Malaysia or settling in Southeast Asian capitals, despite the apparent belief among Uyghurs that the Southeast Asia route is safer.

If the Southeast Asia migration route becomes untenable for disaffected Uyghurs, it may lead to a catch-22 for China. Once the Uyghurs are in Southeast Asia or arrive in Turkey, they may engage in anti-Chinese advocacy activities, and a smaller number may join militant groups in Syria, but they are still hard-pressed to affect the security situation in China. However, if these Uyghurs are unable to leave China at all, then they may vent grievances through violence at home. This is what appears to have happened with the March 2014 Kunming attack, which is now referred to as “China's September 11” in China.

The Chinese government is now left with the difficult task of crafting a policy to deal with disaffected Uyghurs in the country and it remains to be seen whether Chinese security officials and the country's counter-terrorism strategy has the capacity to address the issue successfully. If not, there will likely be more militant attacks in Xinjiang and possibly again in eastern China in the years ahead.

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Notes

1. The “Baren uprising” was an armed confrontation that took place in Kizilsu Kyrgyz Autonomous Prefecture in Xinjiang in April 1990, which led to the deaths of more than 1,000 Uyghurs and Chinese troops in a five-day conflict.

Challenging Uyghur Muslim Identity: More Enforcement, Worse Results

By Haiyun Ma and I-wei Jennifer Chang

Following deadly attacks in Beijing, Kunming and Urumqi over the last year, the Xinjiang government has intensified its efforts to regulate Uyghur religious activities. The provincial government has once again reinforced its ban on Ramadan fasting for Uyghur civil servants and students in 2014, as it has frequently done since at least 2001. Xinjiang has been developing its own policies to discourage Uyghur religious activities and decrease their observance of Islam since 1994, with the promotion of Wang Lequan to provincial Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Secretary. However, these policies have become increasingly counterproductive, as Uyghurs have reinforced their religious identity as a way of resistance, either peacefully or violently.

Ramadan Ban

During this year’s holy month of Ramadan in June and July, the fasting ban focused mainly on Uyghur elites, such as civil servants, Party members and students, as local government agencies, state-run companies and public schools required or encouraged Uyghurs to break their fast by eating during the day. At the beginning of the holy month, ethnic-religious and United Front officials in Hami (*Qumul* in Uyghur) held meetings on how to strengthen control over fasting during Ramadan ([Hami Government](#), June 30). Leveraging their control

over Uyghur Party cadres, local governments provided free meals for lunch, while cadres monitored them for compliance, namely, observing whether the Uyghurs ate their meals and thus broke their fast. Furthermore, these government institutions organized parties and celebrations offering food during the daylight hours throughout Ramadan. For example, the Tarim River Basin Management Bureau celebrated the anniversary of the founding of the CCP by holding a dinner party for its predominantly Uyghur employees on June 28, the first day of Ramadan this year ([Tarim Basin Management Bureau](#), June 30). Similarly, the Pishan County (*Guma nahiyisi* in Uyghur) Industry and Commerce Bureau held “sincere conversation” meetings to prevent its Uyghur employees from fasting during Ramadan ([Xinjiang Administrative Bureau for Industry and Commerce](#), July 3). Additionally, Uyghur business owners were punished if they closed their shops or restaurants during the day, as is customary in many parts of the Muslim world during Ramadan.

Prior Crackdowns

Over the last 20 years, the Xinjiang provincial government has taken a leading role in regulating Chinese Uyghur citizens’ religious activities, especially under hard-line Party Secretary Wang Lequan. This year’s ban on fasting is a first, but rather is a continuation and intensification of long-standing efforts to regulate Islamic practices and identity among Uyghurs. Since the early 1990s, the Xinjiang provincial government has sought to dampen Uyghur observance of Islam by imposing various restrictions on religious activities. The Xinjiang government has instituted a series of laws, regulations and campaigns aimed at restricting Islamic practices and behaviors among Uyghurs, including the aforementioned bans on fasting during Ramadan.

The ascendance of hardliner Wang Lequan to power as Party Secretary in Xinjiang in 1994 was accompanied by targeted attacks against Uyghur Muslim identity, as the local government instituted a series of restrictive policies on religion, directly attacking Islam and focusing on Uyghurs working for the government. In 1991, Wang stated that the major task of his government was to “manage religion and guide it in being subordinate to... unification of the motherland, and the objective of national unity” (*Outlook*, June 25, 2001, no.26, pp.52-53). In a similar statement in 2002, Wang repeated this stance

when he called on his government to “oppose illegal religious activities that use religion to harm the socialist motherland and the people’s interests” (Editorial, *Xinjiang Daily*, October 13, 2002). Local laws and regulations affecting religion enacted under Wang’s leadership include, but are not limited to: *The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Religious Affairs Regulations* (effective in 1994), which tightened control over religion; *Document 7* (1996) that mandates state leadership over religion; *Instructions* (1998), which called for cadres to fight against non-governmental religious activities; and the *Interim Provisions on Disciplinary Punishments for Party Members and Organs That Violate Political Disciplines in Fighting Separatism and Safeguarding Unity* (2000), which directly targeted ethnic Uyghur members of the Chinese Communist Party preventing prayer, Ramadan fasting and religious studies. These measures were aimed at opposing Uyghur separatism and preventing a Central Asian-inspired independence movement following the collapse of the former Soviet Union.

Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, Xinjiang appears to have intensified its “anti-terror” campaign. Beijing labeled some Uyghur groups terrorists and justified further crackdowns on Uyghur activities as part of its counter-terrorism efforts. The September 11 attacks came shortly after the Chinese government unveiled its own campaign against the “three evils” of separatism, extremism and terrorism in April of that year. As China supported the U.S. War on Terror internationally, Xinjiang’s local policies towards Uyghurs became more aggressive and restrictive. According to Uyghur rights activists, Uyghur youths were prohibited from entering mosques, which are all state-controlled and administered. Uyghur villagers were also forbidden to pray outside of their village mosques. Local police forcefully removed veils from Uyghur women’s heads and forced Uyghur men to shave their long beards, which caused family and communal anger and conflicts with the local law enforcement offices. Uyghur families were routinely subjected to surprise break-in searches by the local police (“Sacred Rights Defiled, China’s Iron-Fisted Repression of Uyghur Religious Freedom,” *The Uyghur Human Rights Project*, April 2013, pp.29-72). Unofficial publications of Islamic texts were deemed “pornography” by the Xinjiang government and thus targeted for confiscation and elimination.

In response to increased fear of terrorism, the provincial government discouraged Islam in general and specifically attempted to differentiate local Uyghur religious practices from that of more conservative sects, which it defines as Arab or Wahhabi. The Xinjiang government has officially designated full-body garments for woman and long beards on men as symbols of Wahhabism and the Ghulja city government, among others, have initiated several anti-Wahhabi campaigns ([Yining Government](#), December 15, 2011). In April 2013, the government of Ili Kazak Autonomous Prefecture launched a training program to teach cadres how to resist the penetration of Wahhabism into Uyghur society ([Guancha News](#), April 21, 2013).

More recently, the Xinjiang government has instituted a unique suite of religious policies aimed at Uyghurs, in contrast to the softer approaches to religion in other provinces of China. In March 2012, Uyghur civil servants and retired teachers were forced to sign agreements that they would not practice Islam ([Radio Free Asia](#), March 21, 2012). More recently, the Xinjiang government issued a special identification card in Xinjiang to control domestic travel.

Further, Xinjiang officials appear to have taken a leading role in the development of policies towards Muslims minorities, especially under the rule of Wang Lequan from 1990s to 2010. These provincial leaders have not only made more efforts to control and confront Islam than China’s national government, but have exported these provocative policies to Muslim-populated neighboring provinces. In November 2009, the Xinjiang government announced a campaign targeting un-official and un-censored Islamic publications, called the “Tianshan Project,” spanning China’s entire northwest region including Qinghai, Gansu, Ningxia and Shaanxi ([Xinhua](#), November 21, 2009).

Counter-Productive Results

Since the Xinjiang government has targeted Uyghur religious activities, Uyghurs unhappy with government restrictions on religion are likely to unify behind their Islamic identity, which serves as a political symbol of anti-Chinese resistance. As recent violent attacks indicate, the repressive religious policies have led Uyghur attackers to aggressively assert their Islamic religion by using religious

symbols in their recent attacks, likely in the hopes of mobilizing their fellows Uyghurs to resist Xinjiang's repressive religious policies. According to Chinese media, perpetrators of major attacks at Tiananmen Square and the Kunming railway station carried Shahada-bearing flags, a symbol of Islamic faith not previously seen during violent incidents involving Uyghurs. Xinjiang's repressive policies towards Uyghur religion have produced counter-productive results for the government by contributing to the political and social alienation of elite Uyghurs, religious revitalization among secular Uyghurs, and even radicalization of some Uyghurs.

These events appear to reflect a growing trend of Uyghur resistance that is likely exacerbated by current Xinjiang local provincial policies. More importantly, since Uyghur cadres bear the brunt of the religious regulations, they are forced to choose between their religious identity as Muslims and their occupation as CCP officials. This complicates their role as a bridge between the atheist CCP and the larger Uyghur population. The restrictions on religious expression among Uyghur elites have pushed them far from the state and closer to their own group, which will likely further polarize Xinjiang societal relations between the Uyghurs and the Han.

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The East China Sea ADIZ: Old Policy, New Packaging

By Ian Forsyth

China's November 23, 2013 announcement of an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) covering much of the East China Sea sparked both controversy and questions about China's underlying motivations ([Xinhua](#), November 23, 2013). Beijing's decision to create the ADIZ unilaterally, without prior notice and intentionally encompassing disputed territory, most notably the Senkaku Islands (Diaoyu in Mandarin) in the East China Sea, made it a controversial action. It has been nine months since the ADIZ announcement, and the question must be raised, what has it accomplished for China? The evidence suggests that the ADIZ enables China to rebrand its incursions into the Japanese-controlled Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands as a "reaction," highlighting Beijing's political and non-military applications of the ADIZ. This shift in diplomatic tone has not been met by a corresponding shift in tactics, but rather a relative increase of now-routine incursions compared to the immediate months leading up to the announcement. By gauging how differently China and Japan have been behaving in terms of patrols and other military and quasi-military activities in the East China Sea, as well as examining broader national security policies and statements emanating from Beijing and Tokyo, we see that the ADIZ has not resulted in a surge of maritime activity in the area nor a massive spike in political tensions. However, it is yet another step in the deteriorating Sino-Japanese relationship that makes peaceful resolution of their East China Sea dispute less likely, and the nature of the ADIZ itself increases the likelihood of an air accident that could flare up into something more deadly.

China and Japan's Regional Actions

While the ADIZ may not be an expansion of its historic claims, China is nonetheless utilizing it as a means of solidifying its physical and legal control. Beijing's modus operandi in the East China Sea is to couch its actions as *reactions* to perceived provocations from Japan.

Since China's declaration of an ADIZ over the East China Sea, the Chinese government has increased its reactions to Japanese sensitive reconnaissance operations (SRO) flights. According to Japan's Ministry of Defense, Chinese aerial intrusions into Japan's airspace rose

sharply to 415 in fiscal year 2013, an annual increase of 35 percent and the largest number since the ministry began releasing country-by-country data in 2001 ([Nikkei Asian Review](#), May 3). According to Japan's Ministry of Defense (JMoD), from April through September 2013, China conducted 149 air incursions around Japan. Yet from October 2013 through March 2014, that number jumped to 266, an increase of 78 percent ([JMoD](#), April 9). The bottom line is that the number of PRC air incursions significantly increased after the declaration of the ADIZ. This should not be a surprise given that the ADIZ is, to a large extent, an expression of Chinese sovereignty over the East China Sea. For its part, China's Ministry of Defense (CMoD) announced that it sortied 51 of its own aircraft on 87 SRO missions from November 23, 2013 through December 22, claiming its "routine patrols have beefed up China's effective control over the ADIZ" ([Xinhua](#), December 12, 2013).

Beyond mere numbers of sorties, the Chinese military's actual air engagements have become more frequent than in prior years. For example, in May, Tokyo alleged that Chinese jet fighters flew within 100 feet of Japanese propeller-driven reconnaissance planes in the China's East China Sea ADIZ. More frequent Chinese sorties may also be provoking more frequent interceptions by Japan. In June, Beijing accused the Japanese Self-Defense Force of sending F-15s to trail a Chinese TU-154 plane on a regular patrol in the East China Sea, approaching within 100 feet of the Chinese plane. Tokyo denied this accusation ([SCMP](#), June 13).

Security Policy and Diplomatic Reactions

While the Japanese government had already expressed interest in taking a proactive defense posture, the ADIZ intensified popular fears of China at home in Japan and created political cover for unpopular policy changes. Indeed, a June poll concluded that 85 percent of Japanese are concerned the countries might go to war ([Today Online](#) [Singapore], July 16). In December 2013, Tokyo approved its new National Security Strategy, along with updating its National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) from 2010 and its five-year Mid-Term Defense Program ([National Security Strategy](#), December 17, 2013; [NDPG](#), December 17, 2013; [Mid-Term Defense Program](#), December 17, 2010). The NDPG outlines Japan's defense posture over the next decade while the Mid-Term Defense Program sets out a five-year plan for

procuring the necessary capabilities to fulfill the NDPG.

The net effect of these policies is that Japan will acquire 17 Osprey aircraft and three Global Hawk drones for its Self-Defense Force (SDF) from the United States. The Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) will acquire 52 amphibious vehicles for landing operations, along with maneuver combat vehicles with high running capabilities to replace certain tanks. The Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) will acquire at least 42 F-35A fighter jets to replace its ageing F-4EJ Kai Phantoms, three unarmed Global Hawk drones, and three air-refueling aircraft ([IHS Jane's 360](#), July 9; [DODBuzz](#), December 18, 2013). Lastly, ground radar warning squadrons will be increased from eight to 28. On June 19, the Defense Ministry adopted a new strategy on military equipment that calls for further collaboration with other nations in the procurement of weaponry and enhanced capability to monitor and defend the nation's outlying regions ([Asahi Shimbun](#), June 20). It marked the first time in 44 years that the ministry made changes to its basic policy on military equipment production and technology.

Beyond procurements of new technology, Japan has also begun making organizational preparations for confrontation. Tokyo has also established a new policy coordination body similar to the U.S. National Security Council. Perhaps most significant is Tokyo's commencing of the process of reinterpreting its constitution to participate in collective self-defense. This represents a potential sea change in Japan's national security policy, despite several remaining obstacles—Diet approval is still required and the Japanese public is cautious on the amendments ([Global Times](#), August 6).

Japan's SDF made several high-profile troop deployments to support its ability to maintain control of the Senkakus following the ADIZ announcement. Yonaguni Island, located 150 kilometers south of the Senkakus, is perhaps the biggest beneficiary of these decisions. On April 15, Japan's Ministry of Defense announced its intention to deploy 100 GSDF personnel to Yonaguni by the end of fiscal year (FY) 2015 ([JMoD](#), April 15). On April 19, Defense Minister Onodera broke ground for the construction of a new radar site and GSDF base on the island. The Ministry also announced a plan to create a new early warning squadron at the ASDF's Naha Air Base on Okinawa, including E-2C AWACS and F-15 fighters. On February 3, the *Sankei Shimbun* reported that amphibious

troops, amounting to three regiments totaling 2,000-3,000 personnel, would be deployed to the Sasebo naval facility on Kyushu by the end of fiscal 2018. On April 20, the Ministry of Defense announced the relocation of a squadron of four E-2C patrol aircraft from Misawa to Naha, Okinawa. The SDF intends to move Type 12 surface-to-ship missiles to Kyushu and Miyako Islands, likely to better defend Japan's claims to the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, according to local press reports ([Naval Open Source Intelligence Blog](#), April 15). Lastly, Tokyo is beginning to deploy a GSDF unit on Amami-Oshima Island ([Japan Times](#), May 20). Similar GSDF units will be stationed on Ishigaki and Miyako Islands in Okinawa Prefecture, with each unit consisting of about 400 personnel. The effect of these forces is both symbolic and substantive. It provides symbolic support for the residents of these islands that Tokyo has not forgotten them. Moreover, the radar installation will improve early warning capabilities against any encroaching Chinese civil and military presence.

Complimenting its personnel and hardware moves, Japan's military exercises have acquired an unmistakably island-oriented mission. In January and February of this year, the U.S.-Japan exercise known as "Iron Fist" in southern California focused on invading and retaking an island ([DVIDSHub](#), December 17, 2013). In May, the JSDF simulated defending an island from amphibious invaders. The unprecedented exercise was held on an uninhabited island 375 miles northeast of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and utilized 1,300 troops, as well as fighter jets and destroyers.

On the diplomatic front, Tokyo has enacted a full-court charm offensive with countries that are looking to potentially balance against Beijing, especially those who have territorial disputes with China. Between March and June of this year, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met with his counterparts from Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines and Australia. Abe's negative comments about China at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore were unmistakable: "Movement to consolidate changes to the status quo by aggregating one fait accompli after another can only be strongly condemned as something that contravenes the spirit of these three principles," referring to international norms about the peaceful resolution of disputes ([IISS](#), May 30). Abe's visit to Australia highlighted the enhanced defense relationship, including a deal to transfer submarine technology to Australia and the first

2+2 Defense and Foreign Ministers meeting. Other notable meetings include Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida's meeting with Philippine Foreign Minister Albert del Rosario at Hiroshima in April; Japanese Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera visiting Malaysia in April; and meeting with Prime Minister Najib and Defense Minister Hishamuddin Hussein; and Onodera's June meeting with Vietnamese Defense Minister Phung Quang Thanh in Singapore.

China has responded with its own soft power push, but with a much more domestic focus. Earlier this year, Beijing approved two new national holidays to mark the date of the Nanjing massacre and Japan's surrender. Moreover, China marked the 74th anniversary of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident—the incident that marks the beginning of the second Sino-Japan War—on July 7 with an exceeding amount of ceremony. Relations were especially colorful when both countries' ambassadors to the United Kingdom accused the other country of behaving like the arch-villain Voldemort of the Harry Potter series ([Guardian](#), January 6).

Continuing an Established Trend?

Was the ADIZ the tipping point in Sino-Japanese relations, or was it merely part of a continuing downward trend in bilateral relations over the East China Sea territorial disputes? Although Japan's defense policy was officially adjusted after the ADIZ declaration, its increased defense budget for 2014 suggests that Abe's government was already preparing to counter China's action long before the ADIZ was announced. In August 2013, Tokyo announced an increase to its defense budget for the first time in 11 years and boosted Coast Guard spending as it sought to cope with mounting incursions near the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands by Chinese ships. The defense budget rose 0.8 percent to ¥4.68 trillion (\$51.7 billion), and the Coast Guard budget was slated to rise by 1.9 percent to ¥176.5 billion (\$1.66 billion) for FY2014, its first expansion in six years. However, these decisions pre-dated the ADIZ announcement.

As comprehensively charted in the Center for Strategic and International Studies' *Comparative Connections*, 2013 saw Beijing and Tokyo trading lectures and finger-wagging over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and their history ([Vol. 15, Issue 3](#) [January 2014]). In May and June of that year, Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang, Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei

volleyed rhetorical barbs with Japanese Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide, former Chief Cabinet Secretary Nonaka Hiromu and Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio over the Treaty of Shimonoseki of 1895, the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951 and the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations in 1972.

On July 9, 2013, Japan's Ministry of Defense released its 2013 Defense White Paper, a rallying cry over Chinese assertiveness ([JMoD](#), July 9, 2013).

Japan also took several steps to rationalize its right to collective self-defense prior to the ADIZ announcement. In 2013, Abe was planning to loosen collective self-defense constraints by starting with Article 96 of the Japanese constitution, which stipulates the process for making constitutional changes, and loosen the amendment process to make other changes easier. Abe also told the Lower House Budget Committee that there is a large gap between having the right of collective self-defense and being able to defend yourself.

Most significantly, in terms of maritime incursions, Chinese incursions into both contiguous and territorial waters of the Senkakus surged in September 2012 but have been slowly diminishing since August 2013 ([Nikkei Asian Review](#), May 3).

Impact of the ADIZ

The ADIZ was not the tipping point for Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations nor in terms of maritime incursions. Overall, the downturn in relations started in late 2012 when the islands were bought by the Japanese national government, or even earlier when Japan arrested a Chinese skipper for ramming Japanese Coast Guard vessels near the Senkakus in September 2010. Most importantly, bilateral tensions did not start with the ADIZ announcement in November 2013. However, it has introduced a new level of risk in the region, by virtue of increased air activity that could lead to an unintended conflict. The two countries now must be able to prevent escalation of such incidents if they occur.

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