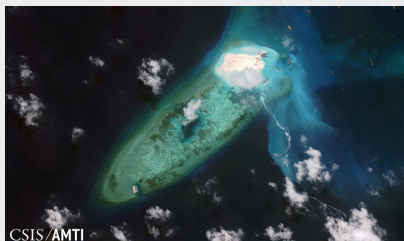


UNDERSTANDING THE POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

Background



graphic by Lindsay Burrows

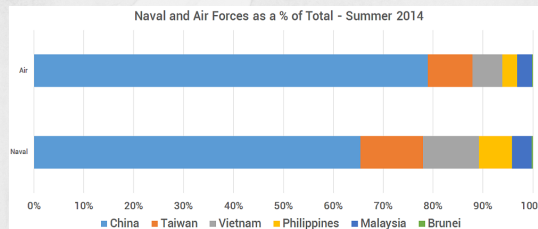


Methodology

Realism	Liberalism	Constructivism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military might • Other material capabilities • "China Threat" vs defensive realists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared institutional values are important • Economic interdependence matters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norms are socially constructed • Treaties, agreements, and diplomacy can check violence

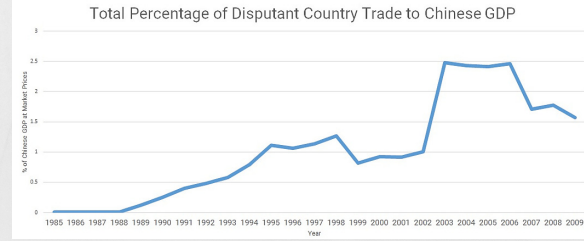
Puzzle: China's growing military dominance in the region is undeniable, making the lack of militarized conflict in the region theoretically confounding. This problem has broad implications for security policy.

Period of Aggression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1950-1999 • Competing claims, conflict, and bloodshed
Charm Offensive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2000-2008 • Diplomacy, Trade, and Optimism
Renewed, Provocative Tensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009-2015 • Island reclamations → state anxiety



Findings

	1950-1999	2000-2008	2009-2015
Relative Power	Low-Moderate	High-Moderate	High
Regional Normative Frameworks	Low	High	Low-High
Economic Interdependence	Low-Moderate	Moderate	High
Use of Force in South China Sea	3	0	0



Economic interdependence was found to have the most plausible constraining influence on the use of force.