
China's strategies over its contested islands –more scenarios than what we tend to see

Akos Kopper*¹ and Tamás Peragovics*²

¹ELTE University Budapest (ELTE) – Hungary

²Central European University (CEU) – Hungary

Abstract (in French and/or English)

Debates over China's foreign policies tend to be conceived more or less along two alternatives, namely either China is seen as a reliable partner of international community or a revolutionary power that poses a threat to established international order. This in case of the islands around its coast - from islands in the South-China Sea to the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands located between China and Japan - means that China is interpreted to be cooperative if it does not question the status of these islands, but interpreted to pose a threat for its neighbors if it exercises sovereign authority over them.

The contention of this paper is that the tendency to interpret China's acts according to such a binary scheme is misleading as it conceals the wider repertoire of strategic options that China may be taking and thereby provides an impoverished understanding of China's diplomatic/strategic reality and the stakes in the political 'games' of East Asia.

In order to make our point we use previous examples from China's foreign relations offering analogies that highlight alternative objectives China may be pursuing.

Finally, in addition to these, we offer additional historical examples of states dealing with their conflicts over islands in order to highlight that there are further conceivable ways of managing conflicts over Islands.

Keywords: China, security, strategy, island, conflict

*Speaker