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Territorial Disputes and Nationalism: A Comparative Case Study of China and Vietnam

Hannah Cotillon

Abstract: In autocracies, nationalism appears to have merged with geo-political thinking. In light of this geopoliticisation of nationalism, it is surprising that the literature has paid virtually no attention to the role of territorial disputes as a conditioning factor. The present study seeks to further enhance the field by factoring in the role of territorial disputes in triggering different expressions of nationalism. It develops an analytical framework for typologies of nationalism according to four territorial disputes: China's dispute with Vietnam over maritime territory in the South China Sea, China's dispute with Japan over maritime territory in the East China Sea, Vietnam's dispute with Cambodia over territorial border demarcations, and Vietnam's dispute with China over maritime territory in the South China Sea. The respective disputes of China and Vietnam are analysed and tested against criteria of expressions of nationalism in autocracies. We find that territorial disputes and therefore external context are important conditioning factors of nationalism in autocracies.

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Keywords: China, Vietnam, nationalism, territorial disputes

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Introduction

The strong anti-Japanese protests that occurred throughout China's main cities in the late summer of 2012 attracted considerable attention from scholars of nationalism in autocracies. In a similar vein, the anti-Chinese protests of May 2014 that escalated into violent riots in South Vietnam solicited a wide range of interpretations. Scholars have been seeking to explain what factors caused these particularly strong expressions of nationalism. Moreover, these demonstrations of anti-foreign nationalism have materialised against the backdrop of shifting geopolitical conditions in East Asia. China has become increasingly assertive in its foreign policy, especially regarding maritime territorial sovereignty in the East and South China Seas (Swaine 2010; Pham 2011; Yahuda 2013). Vietnam has made a significant shift towards alliance politics to counter China's assertiveness and military superiority. Indeed, as a defiant claimant of maritime territory in the South China Sea, Hanoi has sought to strengthen its military and security partnerships with the Philippines, Japan and the US (Hiep 2016: 271–272, 280–281; Panda 2014; Britz 2015). The simultaneity between stronger expressions of nationalism and more assertiveness in foreign policy has prompted scholars to shift from *realpolitik* to more domestic-centred explanations of foreign policy, focusing on nationalism as a central factor. Hence, previous studies have used discourse analysis to measure the impact of structural characteristics of autocracies such as Vietnam and China on expressions of nationalism.

Any analysis of regional security in East Asia requires a deeper understanding of what conditions expressions of nationalism in China and Vietnam. In fact, nationalism itself has merged with geopolitical thinking. “Geopolitik” nationalism likens the state to a living organism that requires geopolitical space of its own in order to develop and function. This approach sees national interest, and therefore nationalism, as being characterised by the territorialisation of space (Hughes 2011: 620). For Vietnamese and Chinese leaders, territorial disputes have become a test of national pride; a lack of assertiveness could be politically damaging. (Hughes 2011; Kurlantzick 2015). Thus, the geopoliticisation of nationalism suggests that the role of territorial disputes is a major factor of expressions of nationalism in China and Vietnam. Accordingly, the present study examines the context surrounding expressions of nationalism. Context is understood here as ongoing circumstances, such as territorial disputes, that occur outside the domestic political realm. As such, it seeks to further enhance the field by factoring in the role of territorial disputes in triggering different typologies of nationalism.

Rather than revoking previous theories on expressions of nationalism in autocracies, this paper integrates those theories into its focus on context. The emphasis on territorial disputes as a conditioning factor for nationalism will be made through an analytical framework constructed from the structural characteristics of China and Vietnam. Using discourse analysis, the framework will examine two of China's territorial disputes and two of Vietnam's territorial disputes against sets of criteria pertaining to expressions of nationalism. As such, the framework contributes to the field of nationalism in autocracies by examining how territorial disputes impact on expressions of nationalism, instead of the other way around. The hypothesis put forward here is that expressions of nationalism in China and Vietnam are sensitive to the dispute in question.

Firstly, I set out the theoretical background that will serve to build the analytical framework. Societal institutions, regime type and historical consciousness are central structural characteristics of China and Vietnam that greatly influence expressions of nationalism. The second section presents the territorial disputes that will be examined. These are China's dispute with Vietnam over maritime territory in the South China Sea, China's dispute with Japan over maritime territory in the East China Sea, Vietnam's dispute with Cambodia over territorial border demarcations, and Vietnam's dispute with China over maritime territory in the South China Sea. The third section introduces the analytical framework, which consists of three sets of criteria, all based on the structural characteristics of China and Vietnam. In order to examine whether expressions of nationalism in China and Vietnam are sensitive to territorial disputes, the third section uses the analytical framework to highlight any variations in expressions of nationalism that take place from one dispute to another. Here, typologies of nationalism according to each of the four territorial disputes will be identified.

Theoretical Background

In order to understand what causes variations in expressions of nationalism in autocracies, we examine the cases of China and Vietnam and build an analytical framework of different expressions of nationalism in autocracies. Womack (2006) conducted a valuable analysis of Sino-Vietnamese relations and also provided useful tools for the examination of China and Vietnam in a comparative context, which serve as a basis for constructing a framework for the analysis of expressions of nationalism. Structural similarities between China and Vietnam can be divided into three strands: societal institutions, regime type and historical consciousness.

China and Vietnam share similar societal institutions, stemming from their common traditional heritage. China's almost continuous domination of Vietnam (111 BC–AD 938 and 1407–1427) resulted in Vietnamese civilisation becoming heavily sinicised (Womack 2006: 11–12). Progressive and radical movements with similar targets, ideologies and methods emerged in both countries in the 20th century. China has served as the most important reference for Vietnamese politics, particularly when it comes to revolution and reform. As such, both nations also took similar actions towards opening their economies to the rest of the world after decades of isolationism under radical communist regimes. This enabled China and Vietnam to join in with the age of globalisation and become major players (Womack 2006: 11–12). As a result of their long-standing similarity in societal institutions, they currently have similar regime types. Consistent with their selection as case studies for explaining expressions of nationalism in autocracies, both China and Vietnam possess autocratic regimes. All branches of power are concentrated within the hands of their respective communist party leaders, Xi Jinping in Beijing and Nguyen Phu Trong in Hanoi. The Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) face no opposition and there are no democratic elections (*The Economist* 2016; China Internet Information Center n.d.; Puah 2016; Viet Nam Government Portal 2016).

Finally, whether at government or popular levels, China and Vietnam possess a nationalist discourse with a strongly embedded historical narrative. China has a strong narrative of pride for its ancient civilisation, imperial greatness and Confucian ideology (see Pye 1999: 35; Gries 2004: 8; Wang 2008: 803). The celebration of Chinese historical greatness is illustrated by the soaring number and popularity of TV series, such as *Scarlet Heart* (步步惊心) or *Kang Dynasty* (康熙王朝), depicting the tales of wise emperors. Likewise, there is an overwhelming sense of pride when it comes to the ordeals the Vietnamese people have had to face throughout history. Indeed, Vietnam was able to maintain its inner balance while complying with oppression by mightier foes, be it China, France or the United States. Those who risked death to rescue the nation from domination are seen as national liberators and heroes (Tréglodé 2001; Womack 2006: 62–64). However, in the midst of these images of pride, both Chinese and Vietnamese historical narratives are also subject to the trauma of war and foreign incursion. While China and Vietnam are fellow victims of Western imperialism, their victimisation narrative also stems from incursions by regional enemies. The Vietnamese have long suffered at the hands of their giant northern neighbour, China. As

for the Chinese, the memory of the horrific destruction and suffering caused by the Japanese army during its occupation of China (1931–1945) is still heavy (Callahan 2004; He 2007; Womack 2006: 25). Therefore, the historical narrative of Chinese and Vietnamese nationalist discourse can be separated into constantly interchanging victimisation narratives and pride narratives.

Similarities in societal institutions, regime type and nature of nationalist discourse indicate that China and Vietnam are appropriate cases for comparison. Moreover, through discourse analysis, scholars have used these structural characteristics to explain expressions of nationalism in autocracies. Interest in the survival of the state's societal institutions, namely the CPC and the CPV, has prompted Chinese and Vietnamese leaders to alleviate control on expressions of nationalist public opinion. In China, “[p]arty legitimacy now depends upon accommodating popular nationalist demands” (Gries 2004: 20). This view argues that variations in expressions of nationalism are explained by the need to ensure Party survival (see also Shirk 2007). Efforts towards the survival of the CPC have led expressions of nationalism to become more common and less controlled, which can cause them to vary to wider extremes. This conclusion can also be applied to Vietnam, where popular voices have been increasing significantly, both in number and confidence (Palatino 2015; Hoang, Huynh and Nguyen 2015). For example, expressions of nationalism demanding that Hanoi stands up to “bullies” like China over territorial disputes are contingent upon the survival of the CPV.

Other scholars have paid less attention to societal institutions and focused more on regime type to explain how nationalism is expressed. Sun (2011), Reilly (2012) and Weiss (2013, 2014) examined how nationalism is expressed in autocracies, where governments have the authority to control and intervene in expressions of public opinion. In particular, they asked what causes variations in expressions of nationalism by examining street protests. Such public expressions of nationalism are typically forbidden or nipped in the bud – organised interest groups can be threatening to the regime – but they are sometimes allowed to take place in order to serve diplomatic interests. Indeed, CPC and CPV leaders employ similar tactics of instrumentalising public nationalist protests.

Historical narrative is ubiquitous in any study of Chinese or Vietnamese nationalism. Historical consciousness forms an integral part of the construction of Chinese nationalism and stems from both top-down and bottom-up constructions. The combination of the CPC's Patriotic Education Campaign and the public opinion of Chinese netizens creates an overwhelmingly strong historical narrative in Chinese nationalism

(Zhao 2004a: 8–9, 2004b: 66; Wang 2008: 803–804; Callahan 2009; Gries 2004: 20). As in China, the historical narrative in Vietnamese nationalism is reinforced by both top-down and bottom-up constructions. National history taught to Vietnamese schoolchildren and university students “serves the purpose of justifying communist rule and the leading role of the CPV” (Salomon and Vu 2007: 345). Like in China, this results in a particularly strong historical consciousness in Vietnamese nationalism (Salomon and Vu 2007: 358).

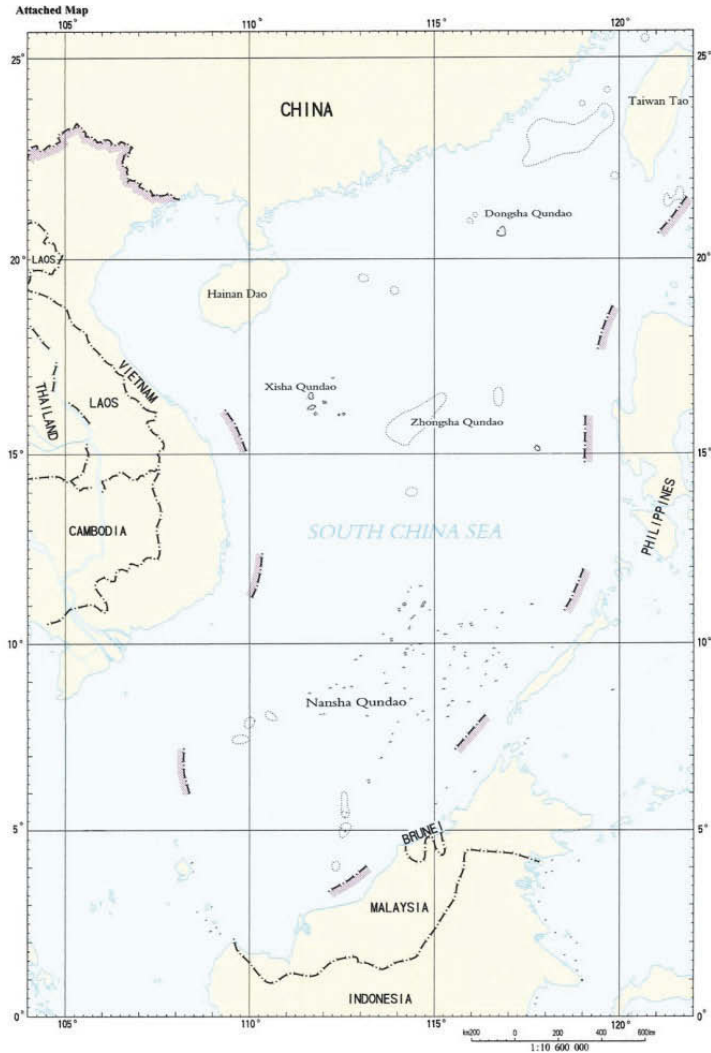
Therefore, expressions of nationalism in China and Vietnam are conditioned by allusions to history but also by their societal institutions and regime types. Before examining how the countries’ structural characteristics will influence the analytical framework, it is necessary to introduce China and Vietnam’s territorial disputes.

China and Vietnam’s Territorial Disputes

The Sino-Vietnamese territorial dispute in the South China Sea, or the East Sea as the Vietnamese call it, is concentrated around two archipelagos: the Paracel Islands (Xisha in Chinese and Hoang Sa in Vietnamese) and the Spratly Islands (Nansha in Chinese and Truong Sa in Vietnamese). In 2009, China submitted a United Nations (UN) *Note Verbale* in response to the one jointly submitted by Vietnam and Malaysia protesting China’s claims. China’s UN *Note Verbale* stated that it possesses “indisputable sovereignty over the islands in the South China Sea and the adjacent waters, and enjoys sovereignty rights and jurisdiction over the relevant water as well as subsoil thereof” (UN 2009). Attached to the document is a map with a nine-dash line indicating China’s maritime claim in the South China Sea (see Figure 1 below). The map below clearly shows that the maritime spaces claimed by China overlap with Vietnam’s (and those of other Southeast Asian neighbours).

China’s claims over maritime territory situated within its nine-dash-line has allowed it to make assertive moves in the South China Sea, whether this involves the patrol of its Coast Guard in disputed waters or deep-water drilling operations. On 1 May 2014, the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) deployed a giant deep-water oil-drilling rig, the Haiyang Shiyou 981 (HYSY 981), into waters south of the Paracel Islands in order to conduct a series of tests (*AFP* 2014). This provoked strong criticism from Hanoi and violence against Chinese citizens in Vietnam. In January 2016, China again demonstrated its claim on the area by placing the HYSY 981 just outside the Gulf of Tonkin, maritime territory also claimed by Vietnam.

Figure 1. Map Attached to the 2009 United Nations *Note Verbale* from China



Source: UN 2009.

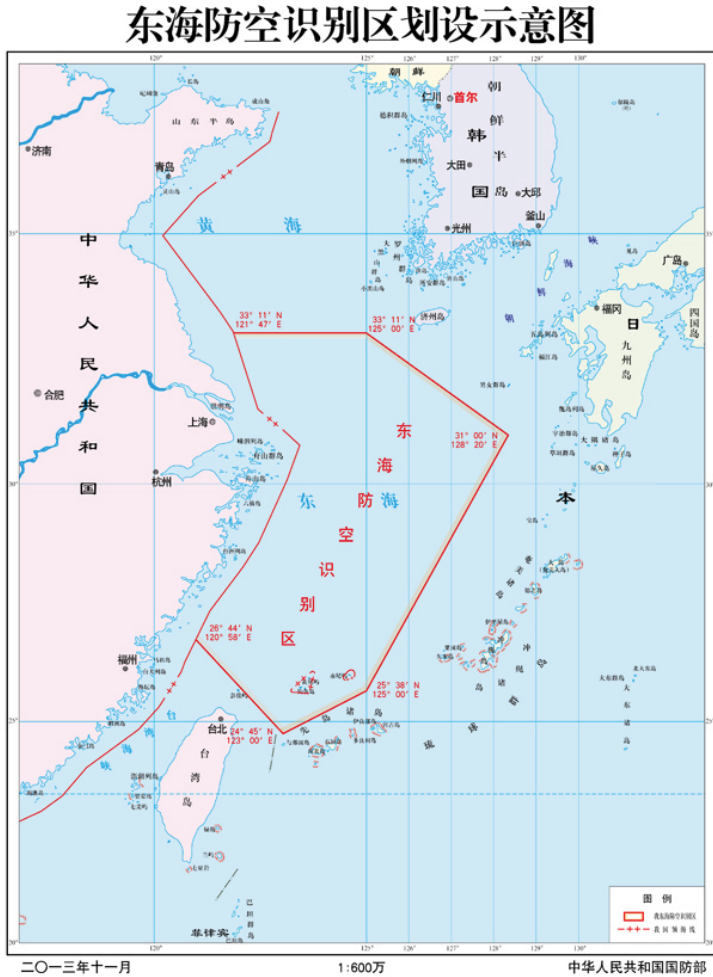
China's dispute with Japan in the East China Sea centres around a small group of inhabited islands that the Chinese call the Diaoyu and the Japanese call the Senkaku. The tensions between the two nations was largely

precipitated by Tokyo's purchase of three of the five main islands in September 2012, a move that was apparently made to prevent an ultranationalist right wing Japanese politician from acquiring them. Beijing accused Tokyo of breaking a tacit agreement to shelve the territorial dispute and began to send its coast guard to patrol the contested waters. A pattern of potentially dangerous interactions between Chinese and Japanese air and naval vessels over the islands' territorial air space and waters began to take form (Swaine 2013: 1). In December 2012, tensions nearly broke into armed conflict when the two countries' aerial forces became embroiled (Smith 2013: 1–2). In November 2013, the Chinese government announced the establishment of an Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ), which overlaps with the airspaces of South Korea, Taiwan and Japan (see Figure 2). In particular, China's ADIZ includes the territorial airspace above the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, elevating its territorial claims in the East China Sea to a higher level, so to speak, and prompting tensions between China and Japan to rise yet again (Swaine 2014: 1).

According to China's Ministry of National Defence, the zone was demarcated in order to safeguard China's sovereignty over the area and done in accordance with Chinese law and international practices (*Xinhua* 2013b). After some stagnation of the tensions in the East China, the Japanese Coast Guard reported in late December 2015 that China had sent an armed vessel near disputed islands – a sharp reminder that tensions remain high in the area (Tiezzi 2016). China entered the disputed waters again in January 2016, showing that it stands by its claim on the maritime territory surrounding the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands.

The territorial disputes of Vietnam examined in this study are those with Cambodia and China. Although Vietnam's website for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as a 2009 article on Vietnam's border disputes, classify the land border issue between Vietnam and Cambodia as settled, recent violence along the shared border argues otherwise. The Moc Bai – Ba Vet border issue should have been settled in 2006 following an agreement between the two nations' prime ministers. The demarcation of the 1200 km long border was due to be completed in 2012, but 20 per cent of it remains unmarked (Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009a; Amer and Thao 2009: 59; Tomiyama 2015). In recent years, tensions on the Vietnamese-Cambodian border have begun to flare up again as anti-Vietnamese nationalism and a perceived Vietnamese threat begins to regain momentum.

Figure 2. China's Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea

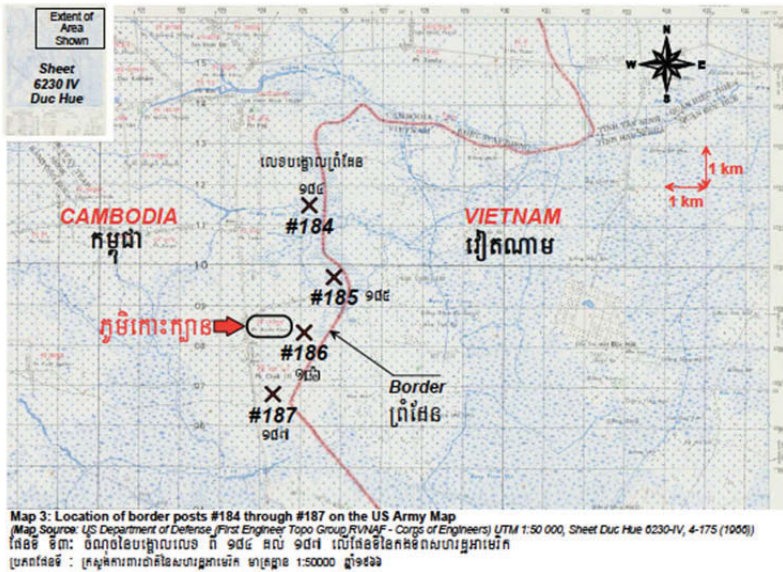


Source: *Xinhua* 2013a.

In 2009, Sam Rainsy, the leader of the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), allegedly encouraged villagers to uproot border markers in Svay Rieng province, flaring up tensions and causing violent clashes between Vietnamese and Cambodian civilians (Chheang 2015). In June 2015, tensions culminated into violent clashes on the Vietnamese-Cambodian border. This latest incident was precipitated by CNRP

lawmakers Real Camerin and Sam An, who led around 250 Cambodian activists armed with sticks into Vietnamese territory. They were met by Vietnamese security officers and local residents who tried to prevent them from trespassing. The altercation soon escalated into violent clashes between the two groups and dozens of Vietnamese and Cambodian nationals were injured (RFA 2015; *Khmer Times* 2015; Florcruz 2015; Chheang 2015). The map (Figure 3) below indicates the location of the border markers (X) and the actual borderline according to Sam Rainsy.

Figure 3. The Cambodia-Vietnam Border According to Sam Rainsy



Source: Sokheounpang 2013.

Thus, in the context of the present study, the land border dispute between Vietnam and Cambodia cannot be considered as resolved.

Vietnam’s maritime territorial dispute with China in the South China Sea has been ongoing since 1974, when Vietnam accused China of the opportunistic takeover of the Paracel Islands (Path 2011: 190). Because the onset of this dispute has already been analysed in the context of China’s territorial disputes, I will not go further into its developments.

The four disputes presented above can be separated into three types. China’s dispute with Vietnam and Vietnam’s dispute with Cambodia are dispute type 1 – dispute with a traditionally weaker rival. China’s dispute

with Japan is dispute type 2 – dispute with a rival whose relative strength has varied throughout history. Vietnam’s dispute with China is dispute type 3 – dispute with a traditionally stronger rival. If expressions of nationalism in China and Vietnam are sensitive to the dispute in question, then this suggests that dispute type could also be a conditioning factor of nationalism in autocracies. However, in order to examine whether this is the case, it is necessary to become acquainted with the second variable, which is the criteria for expressions of nationalism in autocracies such as China and Vietnam.

Presentation of the Analytical Framework

The analytical framework consists of three criteria – A, B and C – based on the structural characteristic of China and Vietnam examined above. The nature of Chinese and Vietnamese societal institutions and regime type has meant that expressions of nationalism, even as far as public protests, are permitted at popular levels and are maintained at governmental levels. Therefore, I make a distinction here between different levels of discourse – official (government level) and non-official (popular level) – in order to examine expressions of nationalism. The method of discourse analysis will be used to examine expressions of nationalism in China and Vietnam.

Moreover, the various interchanging narratives of historical consciousness will be highlighted throughout the analytical framework. As such, the first set of criteria, Criteria A, examines the discourse surrounding the territorial dispute in question from an ‘official’ perspective to understand the typology of nationalism for each dispute. The nature of official discourse on the dispute will be determined according to two elements: (1) the presence (or absence) of a fervent discourse surrounding the dispute and (2) whether the discourse contains references to history. The first element for determining the nature of official discourse surrounding a territorial dispute is whether or not there is one. Has there been an official statement concerning the territorial dispute from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs? Has a spokesperson from the government disclosed any information on a recent development in the contested area? Has official state media made any reports on current events regarding the territorial dispute? If so, can this discourse be described as ‘fervent’? In other words, does it convey a sense of importance? Does the statement, comment or article appear keen and committed to the territorial dispute? If the answer to these questions are yes, then two further sub-elements ensue; whether there is an anti-foreign narrative in the dis-

course, and whether it involves violence. These two sub-elements will help determine the extent to which the official discourse on the dispute is fervent.

The second element that will determine the nature of official discourse on the dispute is whether it contains references to history. Do statements from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, government spokespersons or state media make any historical references, whether they directly concern the rival state or not? Indeed, references to history in official discourse range from a general tribute to the state's own history, to recollections of the shared history between said state and its rival, whether they are periods of enmity or amity. If the official discourse on the dispute contains references to history, then two sub-elements ensue: the presence (or absence) of a victimisation narrative followed by the presence (or absence) of a pride narrative. The presence (or absence) of a fervent discourse and the references (or not) to history, along with their respective sub-elements, will draw a clear picture of the nature of official discourse concerning the territorial dispute in question.

The second set of criteria, labelled Criteria B, examines the discourse surrounding territorial disputes from a 'non-official' perspective. The material examined here is sourced in large part from social media and online forums. The focus on expressions of nationalism from Chinese and Vietnamese citizens who use the internet to assert their public opinion – otherwise known as 'netizens' – is motivated by the recent skyrocketing number of internet users. The number of internet users has increased nearly five-fold in China and three-fold in Vietnam (*Internet Live Stats* 2016). Sun found that "[t]he opinions of Chinese netizens are often identified by observers, including some serious researchers, as a key indicator of Chinese public opinion on foreign policies" (2011). The same can be said of Vietnamese netizens, whose public opinions are "getting bolder online" (Palatino 2015; see also *RFA* 2014), providing an accurate representation of the public's views on both domestic and foreign affairs for researchers to analyse. Like Criteria A, Criteria B are determined by two elements: (1) the presence (or absence) of a fervent discourse surrounding the dispute and (2) whether the discourse contains references to history. Criteria B also contains the same sub-elements as put forward in Criteria A.

Criteria C completes the analytical framework by examining expressions of nationalism at their apogee, where nationalist sentiments from the public are expressed physically, despite the risks it entails in states where protests are typically forbidden. Consistent with the above sets of criteria, Criteria C looks at the context in which public protests take

place and asks whether the nature of the protests is sensitive to the dispute in question. Accordingly, a number of elements are necessary in order to determine the nature of protests concerning the territorial dispute. The first is the presence (or absence) of protests relating to the dispute at hand. Because public protests are typically forbidden in autocracies like China and Vietnam, it is practically impossible to know whether a protest did not take place because it was nipped in the bud or because the public did not find the motivation to actually stage one. Nonetheless, if there are such public manifestations relating to the territorial dispute in question, then the next step is to determine whether there is an anti-foreign narrative and whether the discourse involves elements of violence. This will help determine the nature of the public protests concerning the dispute, if there are any at all.

The nature of these public protests will be further determined by whether or not banners, slogans or any actions by protesters make any references to history. Here, the emotional intonations are clearly more emphasised than in Criteria B and C. Symbolism is rife and passions grow stronger as group mentality push protesters to act even more vehemently than they would otherwise do.

The three sets of criteria against which each of the four disputes will be examined can be summarised using the following table.

Table 1. The Analytical Framework

CRITERIA A	NATURE OF OFFICIAL DISCOURSE ON THE DISPUTE	
PRESENCE OF A FERVENT DISCOURSE		YES/NO
Presence of anti-foreign narrative		
Involvement of violence		
REFERENCES TO HISTORY		YES/NO
Victimisation narrative		
Pride narrative		
CRITERIA B	NATURE OF NON-OFFICIAL DISCOURSE ON THE DISPUTE	
PRESENCE OF A FERVENT DISCOURSE		YES/NO
Presence of anti-foreign narrative		
Involvement of violence		
REFERENCES TO HISTORY		YES/NO
Victimisation narrative		
Pride narrative		

CRITERIA C	NATURE OF PROTESTS CONCERNING THE DISPUTE	
PRESENCE OF PROTESTS		YES/NO
Presence of anti-foreign narrative		
Involvement of violence		
REFERENCES TO HISTORY		YES/NO
Victimisation narrative		
Pride narrative		

Note: Should any of the elements of Criteria A, B or C become apparent in the discourse (a 'YES' answer), then the sub-elements that they possess will be marked with an 'X'. Thus, the presence of a pride narrative, for example, is contingent on there being references to history in the discourse. Moreover, should the territorial dispute not generate any protests (a 'NO' answer to 'PRESENCE OF PROTESTS'), the entirety of Criteria C will be greyed out.

Whether expressions of nationalism in China and Vietnam are sensitive to the dispute in question – indicating that context is indeed a conditioning factor of nationalism – will be examined through the analysis of territorial disputes against the criteria detailed above.

Typologies of Nationalism According to Territorial Dispute

In order to determine whether nationalism in China and Vietnam is sensitive to different disputes by highlighting variations in expressions of nationalism, China’s maritime territorial dispute with Vietnam, China’s maritime territorial dispute with Japan, Vietnam’s territorial border dispute with Cambodia, and Vietnam’s maritime territorial dispute with China will be examined against Criteria A, B and C.

The first dispute, China’s dispute with Vietnam over maritime territory in the South China Sea, is a ‘dispute type 1’; that is, a dispute with a traditionally weaker rival. China has issued a number of official statements, documents, speeches and written reports of press conferences concerning its claims in the South China Sea. In response to Vietnamese denunciations of China for deploying a giant oil rig, HYSY 981, into waters south of the Paracel Islands, China’s Foreign Ministry vehemently defended CNOOC’s rights to undertake work around the Paracel Islands and condemned interference by Vietnamese patrol vessels (China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014a, 2014b). Moreover, Chinese state media has widely broadcast details of the May 2014 violence that took place against Chinese nationals in Vietnam. The discourse put forward by China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs appears keen and committed to its stance on the maritime territorial dispute with Vietnam. As expected, the

discourse discernable in state media is well in line with that of statements from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It can therefore be deduced that the official discourse on the maritime territorial dispute with Vietnam is a fervent one. The question now arises as to whether it contains an anti-foreign narrative and whether it involves threats of violence. No offensive generalisations against Vietnam have been made in any sources of official discourse. The interviews of Chinese nationals only express their relief to have escaped the violence and make no comments suggesting hatred against Vietnamese people. It is harder to discern whether official discourse involves threats of violence, amid statements that China will take “all necessary measures to safeguard national sovereignty and maritime rights and interests” (China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014a). However, China’s assertions do not explicitly threaten Vietnam with military intervention. It appears that China is merely prodding Vietnam to remind it of its claim, rather than using military force to coerce it into accepting China’s sovereignty over the disputed area. There have been very few historical references in official discourse pertaining to China’s dispute with Vietnam over territory in the South China Sea. Those that have been made are not significant enough for this analysis to argue that the official discourse pertaining to China’s dispute with Vietnam in the South China Sea contains historical references.

Because maritime territorial disputes in the South and East China Seas hold Chinese people to heart (Chubb 2014), this topic has been heavily discussed on social media platforms and online forums. On *Sina Weibo*, for example, anger and anxiety was expressed over the May 2014 anti-Chinese riots in Vietnam. Emotions also ran high on the *People’s Daily’s* “Strong Nation Forum” (SNF). Many posts manifested their confusion about the situation, with variations on the question “What on earth are the Vietnamese doing?” appearing in many posts on the forum. The discourse present in non-official sources is unanimously in favour of maintaining China’s stance on the dispute and conveys a sense of importance to the issue. Moreover, unlike official discourse on the dispute, there is a strong anti-Vietnamese narrative on social media platforms and online forums. Many users on *Sina Weibo* applied the racial epithet of 鬼子 *guizi*, which means “devil”, to refer to people of Vietnamese nationality (*ChinaFile* 2014). The SNF also shows uses of the term “devil” to describe Vietnamese people, with one post contending that “China should seize and punish the foreign devils who unlawfully infringe on or undermine China’s sovereignty over maritime territory”. As well as containing an anti-foreign narrative, non-official discourse involves a considerable amount of violence. The vocabulary used in posts on *Sina*

Weibo and the SNF is particularly aggressive and repeatedly calls for more assertiveness on behalf of China's leaders (*ChinaFile* 2014; *Freeweibo* 2014). As for references to history, they are ubiquitous in non-official discourse. *Sina Weibo* users often invoke the Sino–Vietnamese war of 1979 in their calls for China to go to war with Vietnam over its repeated dismissal of Chinese sovereignty on the Paracel and Spratly Islands and the violence committed against Chinese nationals in May 2014 (*ChinaFile* 2014). Posts on the SNF call for Vietnam to remember its war against the US. As well as “China’s military sacrifice for Vietnam”, Vietnam as a “vassal state” and Vietnam’s military inferiority to China are other topics frequently cited in non-official discourse. There is a sense of pride in these historical references. China sees itself as morally superior to Vietnam. Aside from accusations that the Vietnamese are ungrateful to China for its services during the Vietnam War, there is no victimisation narrative discernable in the discourse.

Despite fervent official and non-official discourse pertaining the dispute with Vietnam over maritime territory in the South China Sea, there have been no street protests in China over the issue. It is not possible to tell whether they have been nipped in the bud by the Chinese state or whether there was simply not enough public outrage to stage a protest. What can be said with certainty is that this type of dispute did not generate an escalation of expressions of nationalism to that level of intensity. Should non-official sources of nationalism have wanted to escalate their expressions of nationalism for this dispute to that intensity, this would mean that such a desire was not met at the official level.

Table 2 summarises the testing of the May 2014 escalation of China’s dispute with Vietnam over maritime territory in the South China Sea – a territorial dispute with a traditionally weaker rival – against Criteria A, B and C.

The second dispute, China’s Dispute with Japan over maritime territory in the East China Sea, is a type-2 dispute; that is, a dispute with a rival whose relative strength has varied throughout history. Chubb’s assessment of China’s maritime consciousness noted that more attention was given to the dispute with Japan over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands than to the dispute in the South China Sea (Chubb 2014: 9–10). Indeed, an examination of the official discourse on the matter suggests that this may well be the case. Official statements, documents, speeches and written reports of press conferences concerning China’s claims in the East China Sea are particularly numerous and wide-ranging.

Table 2. The Typology of Nationalism According to China’s Dispute with Vietnam

CRITERIA A	NATURE OF OFFICIAL DISCOURSE ON THE DISPUTE	
PRESENCE OF A FERVENT DISCOURSE		YES
Presence of anti-foreign narrative		
Involvement of violence		
REFERENCES TO HISTORY		NO
Victimisation narrative		
Pride narrative		
CRITERIA B	NATURE OF NON-OFFICIAL DISCOURSE ON THE DISPUTE	
PRESENCE OF A FERVENT DISCOURSE		YES
Presence of anti-foreign narrative		X
Involvement of violence		X
REFERENCES TO HISTORY		YES
Victimisation narrative		
Pride narrative		X
CRITERIA C	NATURE OF PROTESTS CONCERNING THE DISPUTE	
PRESENCE OF PROTESTS		NO
Presence of anti-foreign narrative		
Involvement of violence		
REFERENCES TO HISTORY		
Victimisation narrative		
Pride narrative		

Note: Dispute type 1 – dispute with a traditionally weaker rival.

In September 2012, when tensions between the two nations were precipitated by Tokyo’s purchase of three of the five main islands, China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs was quick to condemn the move (China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2012a, 2012b). Chinese state media has systematically reported on government statements as events and escalations in the East China Sea have unfolded throughout the years (*Xinhua* 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). All of the reports from *Xinhua* and *People’s Daily* on the matter elaborate extensively on the unlawful act committed by Japan in nationalising the islands. Therefore, official discourse on this dispute is clearly fervent. However, as was the case for the dispute with Vietnam over maritime territory in the South China Sea, official discourse avoids any strong narratives with xenophobic connotations, although it does involve elements of violence. Close examination of official discourse

reveals a sense of readiness to intervene militarily if required (whether Beijing would actually do so is another question). In particular, the fact that China has bolstered its right to send an armed vessel into disputed waters (China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015) underlines the violent elements in official discourse pertaining to the dispute. With regard to the second element that will help assess the nature of official discourse on the dispute, there are strong references to history throughout. One statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs protests Japan's undermining of China's sovereignty over the islands:

Long gone are the days when the Chinese nation was subject to bullying and humiliation from others. The Chinese government will not sit idly by watching its territorial sovereignty being infringed upon. (China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2012b)

State media also makes clear references to history in many of its articles concerning the current dispute with Japan (see *Xinhua* 2012a). References to history in official discourse contain both a victimisation narrative and a pride narrative. At first glance, the pride narrative is hard to discern amongst the overwhelming references to Japan's invasion of China, the "September 18 Incident" and the humiliation of the Chinese people. However, in stating that China will no longer accept such treatment by the Japanese, Chinese leaders wish to announce it is time to turn the page on years of humiliation at the hands of foreign imperialism and retrieve its deserved status on the world stage. China wishes to regain the respect that it once had in the eyes of its Asian neighbours.

Given the nature of official discourse, it is unsurprising that social media and online forums concerning the issue are particularly fervent. The majority of posts on *Sina Weibo* carry a strong adversarial sentiment towards Japan's actions in the disputed maritime territory. On the *People's Daily's* SNF, a simple search for the key word "Diaoyu Dao" results in 1741 pages containing various posts and threads on the matter. Accordingly, the non-official discourse pertaining to this dispute contains all the elements of Criteria B; a fervent discourse with the presence of an anti-foreign narrative and the involvement of violence, as well as references to history with both the victimisation and pride narratives are strong characteristics of non-official nationalism about the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island dispute. Indeed, the term 鬼子 *guizi* ("devil") to describe the Japanese was widely used on *Sina Weibo* and the SNF. There were calls for China to be increasingly assertive in order to tackle the situation, thus suggesting that the non-official discourse involves elements of violence. As for references to history, the trauma of Japan's actions during its

imperial years is clear throughout the non-official discourse. One user on the SNF, called Bao Dao Yao Li Zhi, painted China as having the moral high ground as a “victim” of aggression by outside powers. A narrative of pride is also discernable in the discourse: Chinese netizens are celebrating China rising once again to Great Power status. One post on *Sina Weibo* represents this superimposition of victimisation and pride narratives:

Today in history: on August 15, 1945, Japan announced to the world its unconditional surrender. On this memorable day, we should remind our future generations to remember the horrendous crimes Japan committed to Chinese people. Now our motherland is rising. We would never again allow Japan to play gangsters on our territory. Let's fight against imperialist invasion, defend our sovereignty, and protect world peace!

This post refers simultaneously to China's victory in the Second World War, China's suffering at the hands of the “Japanese imperialists” and China's return to Great Power status after a century of humiliation.

Expressions of nationalism in China about the territorial dispute in the East China Seas culminated in September 2012 when Tokyo moved to purchase three of the five main Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. In dozens of Chinese cities, crowds of young Chinese protesters gathered to express their disdain for Japan and the Japanese. The presence of an anti-foreign narrative here is evident from pictures of the demonstrations. Thousands of protesters across China's major cities were pictured draped in the Chinese flag, brandishing portraits of Chairman Mao, exclaiming that the “Diaoyu Islands belong to China” and calling on the Japanese to “get out” (*People's Daily* 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). Japanese flags were burned and pictures of Japanese leaders were vandalised (Wee and Duncan 2012; Spegele and Nakamichi 2012; *The Economist* 2012). As in the Criteria B, expressions of nationalism about China's maritime territorial dispute with Japan, used the term 鬼子 *guizi*: “Return our islands! Japanese devils get out!” (Wee and Duncan 2012). As for the involvement of violence, it is evident from the degree of the anti-foreign narrative depicted above that the protests were violent in nature. The anti-Japanese demonstrations of late summer 2012 escalated from orderly to completely out of hand, with Japanese business vandalised and set alight (*Xinhua* 2012d; Johnson and Shanker 2012). On 15 September 2012, a Toyota Corolla owner in Xi'An was severely beaten up because he was driving a Japanese car (Zhang 2014: 92; Huang 2012). Given that the rival in question was a prime war-time enemy of China, it is not surprising that references to history were invoked during the anti-Japanese protests. Protesters

shouted slogans such as “down with Japanese imperialism” (Jiang 2012). In a series of photos published by Reuters (Blanchard and Slodkowski 2012), a victimisation narrative and a pride narrative are both observable in the protests. In Guangzhou, on the anniversary of the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, a protester is photographed burning a Japanese flag in front of a banner with photos of the Sino-Japanese War. Combined with other photos showing protesters brandishing banners and placards of Chairman Mao and the Chinese flag, Chinese protesters seem to be showing that further aggression from Japan will no longer be tolerated now that China is strong again.

China’s dispute with Japan over maritime territory in the East China Sea – a dispute with a rival whose relative strength has varied throughout history – carries a strong discourse at both the official and non-official levels. The fact that protests were allowed to take place suggests a tacit agreement by the Chinese state that expressions of nationalism deserved to be escalated to this degree. Table 3 summarises the flare-up of tensions with Japan over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands late in the summer of 2012 against Criteria A, B and C.

The third dispute that this paper examines, Vietnam’s Dispute with Cambodia over territorial border demarcations, is a type-1 dispute; that is, a dispute with a traditionally weaker rival. Because the border dispute with Cambodia flared up due to actions not condoned by the Cambodian government, Vietnam does not generally issue a large number of official statements and documents on the dispute when tensions escalate. However, Hanoi has been particularly critical of CNRP leader Sam Rainsy’s provocative actions along the border. When Rainsy went to the border area between Long An Province in Vietnam and Svay Rieng Province in Cambodia in 2009 to uproot border poles, the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs was quick to condemn his actions (Vietnam’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2009b). When violent clashes led by members of the CNRP took place on the Vietnamese-Cambodian border in June 2015, Vietnam’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly criticised the violence. It stated that the perpetrators “violated both Vietnam and Cambodia’s laws, as well as treaties and agreements signed by both sides” (Vietnam’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015). State-controlled media outlets have also published articles about the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ condemnation of Cambodian politicians taking issue with the border demarcation (*Tuoi Tre News* 2015a, 2015b). Vietnamese official discourse pertaining to the territorial border dispute with Cambodia can be described as fervent only to the extent that actions by “Cambodian extremists” have been strongly condemned. Accordingly, a thorough analysis of

statements and documents published by the Vietnamese government and state media reveals no anti-Cambodian narrative nor threats to use violence. Moreover, there are almost no historical references to the at times tumultuous relationship between Vietnam and Cambodia, nor are there any concerning Vietnam’s own history. Thus, the official discourse pertaining to Vietnam’s territorial border dispute with Cambodia and, more specifically, the violent clashes of June 2015 in border regions, is limited to a handful of official statements and documents containing a fervent discourse.

Table 3. The Typology of Nationalism According to China’s Dispute with Japan

CRITERIA A	NATURE OF OFFICIAL DISCOURSE ON THE DISPUTE	
PRESENCE OF A FERVENT DISCOURSE		YES
Presence of anti-foreign narrative		
Involvement of violence		X
REFERENCES TO HISTORY		YES
Victimisation narrative		X
Pride narrative		X
CRITERIA B	NATURE OF NON-OFFICIAL DISCOURSE ON THE DISPUTE	
PRESENCE OF A FERVENT DISCOURSE		YES
Presence of anti-foreign narrative		X
Involvement of violence		X
REFERENCES TO HISTORY		YES
Victimisation narrative		X
Pride narrative		X
CRITERIA C	NATURE OF PROTESTS CONCERNING THE DISPUTE	
PRESENCE OF PROTESTS		YES
Presence of anti-foreign narrative		X
Involvement of violence		X
REFERENCES TO HISTORY		YES
Victimisation narrative		X
Pride narrative		X

Note: Dispute type 2 – dispute with a rival whose relative strength has varied throughout history.

As seen in the case of China’s dispute with Vietnam in the South China Sea, it is possible that non-official discourse pertaining to Vietnam’s territorial border dispute with Cambodia is unrestrained in comparison to

the official discourse. Vietnam's dispute with Cambodia over territorial border demarcation has been discussed at length on social media and online forums. Vietnam's most popular social media platform, *Facebook*, contains many references to the territorial border dispute with Cambodia, especially around the time of the June 2015 clashes. Through comments, shares and "likes", Vietnamese *Facebook* users express both their love for their country and their anger at Cambodian politicians complicating the demarcation process along the shared border. First and foremost, posts about the dispute on the official *Facebook* pages of *Thanh Nien News* and *Tuoi Tre News* have been shared and "liked" hundreds of times. Reports on Cambodia's accusations of Vietnam and violent clashes on the border led by "Cambodian extremists" have attracted many comments and discussion threads by *Facebook* users. Secondly, prominent *Facebook* users such as Le Nguyen Huong Tra, who has 314,591 followers, have also participated in posting and sharing material concerning the dispute. For example, on 19 July 2015, Huong Tra added 20 photos of the June 2015 incident, attracting nearly 10,000 "likes" and thousands of comments. Finally, the comment sections of articles published on the official websites of *Thanh Nien News* and *Tuoi Tre News* have attracted the opinions of a number of Vietnam netizens (*Thanh Nien News* 2015; *Tuoi Tre Online* 2015). The considerable amount of attention that Vietnamese netizens have given to non-official sources of discourse on the dispute shows that the discourse is fervent. That said, an analysis of these four sources of discourse about Vietnam's territorial border dispute with Cambodia shows no signs of an anti-Cambodian narrative or calls for the Vietnamese government to use violent measures in order to tackle the tense situation.

However, references to history are particularly frequent in comment sections of *Facebook* posts and articles from official news websites covering the June 2015 incident on the Vietnamese-Cambodian border. A recurring theme emerges when scanning through the long list of comments on the pictures: Vietnamese netizens are accusing Cambodians of being ungrateful for the role the Vietnamese played in ending Pol Pot's regime. A further examination of the non-official discourse pertaining to Vietnam's dispute with Cambodia over the border demarcation reveals a narrative of pride. Vietnamese netizens remind Cambodians of their benevolence towards the Cambodian people when they were suffering at the hands of Pol Pot, and the sacrifice Vietnamese soldiers made in order to save non-Vietnamese citizens. This period of Vietnam's history remains very vivid in the memories of Vietnamese netizens. Their disappointment with Cambodian "extremists" conveys a sense of superiority

in morality of the Vietnamese people. All historical references in the non-official discourse are of Vietnam’s intervention in Cambodia and there is no victimisation narrative discernable. Therefore, netizens are extremely proud of their “liberation” mission in Cambodia of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Despite fervent official and non-official discourse pertaining to the dispute with Cambodia over border demarcations, there have been no public protests in Vietnam over the issue. As with the Chinese case and its maritime territorial dispute with Vietnam, it is impossible to tell whether the absence of protests is due to the government nipping them in the bud or because Vietnamese citizens did not reach that level of outrage against “Cambodian extremists”. If non-official sources of nationalism wanted to escalate their expressions of nationalism for this dispute to that intensity, this means that such a desire was not reflected at the official level.

Table 4 summarises the testing of Vietnam’s dispute with Cambodia over border demarcations – a territorial dispute with a traditionally weaker rival – against Criteria A, B and C.

The fourth dispute examined in this study is a type-3 dispute; that is, a dispute with a traditionally stronger rival. From Vietnam’s standpoint, China’s claims in the South China Sea are the latest in a series of aggressive acts by the overwhelmingly stronger neighbour. However, Vietnam’s leaders and its people have stood strong against Chinese assertiveness. In May 2014, when CNOOC deployed the giant oil rig HYSY 981 into waters claimed by Vietnam, Hanoi issued a number of official statements, documents, speeches and written reports of press conferences to denounce Beijing’s usurpation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that “China’s activities, in violation of international law, escalate tension in the East Sea” (Vietnam’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014a, 2014b).

Table 4. The Typology of Nationalism According to Vietnam’s Dispute with Cambodia

CRITERIA A	NATURE OF OFFICIAL DISCOURSE ON THE DISPUTE	
PRESENCE OF A FERVENT DISCOURSE		YES
Presence of anti-foreign narrative		
Involvement of violence		
REFERENCES TO HISTORY		NO
Victimisation narrative		
Pride narrative		

CRITERIA B	NATURE OF NON-OFFICIAL DISCOURSE ON THE DISPUTE	
PRESENCE OF A FERVENT DISCOURSE		YES
Presence of anti-foreign narrative		
Involvement of violence		
REFERENCES TO HISTORY		YES
Victimisation narrative		
Pride narrative		X
CRITERIA C	NATURE OF PROTESTS CONCERNING THE DISPUTE	
PRESENCE OF PROTESTS		NO
Presence of anti-foreign narrative		
Involvement of violence		
REFERENCES TO HISTORY		
Victimisation narrative		
Pride narrative		

Note: Dispute type 1 – dispute with a traditionally weaker rival.

Vietnam also took China to the UN over its sovereignty claims in the South China Sea. On 3 July 2014, Hanoi sent a paper to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon “opposing China’s illegal occupation of the Hoang Sa (Paracel) archipelago and asserting Vietnam’s sovereignty over it” (Vietnam’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014c, 2014d, 2014e). China’s May 2014 activities around the Paracel Islands were also extensively covered by Vietnamese official state media. *Thanh Nien News* and *Tuoi Tre News* reported on statements and press conferences issued by the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Tuoi Tre News* 2014a, 2014b; *Thanh Nien News* 2014a, 2014b, 2014c). They also reported on Vietnam elevating the dispute to the UN (*Tuoi Tre News* 2014c, 2014d; *Thanh Nien News* 2014d, 2014e, 2014f).

The number of official statements and state media reports concerning China’s placement of HYSY 981 in waters claimed by Vietnam – let alone the number of statements concerning the dispute in general – clearly shows the importance that Vietnam attaches to this dispute. Vietnamese official discourse appears keen and committed to the dispute with China over maritime territory in the South China Sea; therefore, the discourse is fervent. If the official discourse is fervent, then does it put forward an anti-foreign narrative and does it involve violence? As was the case for the dispute with Cambodia over territorial border demarcations, Vietnamese official discourse avoids any strong narratives with xenophobic intonations. Regarding the involvement of violence, an overwhelming majority of the official discourse stresses the need to settle

the dispute with China peacefully (Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014f, 2015d, 2014g). Vietnam has indeed turned to the international community, and to the UN more specifically, for support in resolving the dispute. Therefore, it cannot be argued that Hanoi has shown readiness to intervene militarily over the maritime territorial dispute with China in the South China Sea. As for references to history, from Vietnam's perspective, its relationship with China is laden with historical baggage. However, aside from the use of historical evidence to prove Vietnam's sovereignty over the disputed maritime territory (Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014h), there are no historical references in the discourse.

Considering the historical relationship of China and Vietnam, it is not surprising that non-official discourse pertaining to Vietnam's maritime territorial dispute with China in the South China Sea is particularly fervent. Indeed, the Vietnamese tend to express their nationalism on social media and online forums loudly and clearly. Hence, a simple *Facebook* search, in Vietnamese, for the key words "China" and "Paracel Islands" produces a long list of results, especially around the time of the May 2014 escalation of the dispute. Vietnamese netizens commented, shared and "liked" thousands of *Facebook* posts about China's placement of HYSY in 981 in Vietnamese waters. As was the case with the examination of non-official discourse about Vietnam's dispute with Cambodia, the non-official discourse pertaining to Vietnam's maritime territorial dispute with China can be separated into several types of sources. First, many of the articles from *Thanh Nien News* and *Tuoi Tre News* have been posted on the media outlets' *Facebook* pages. These attracted a lot of attention from *Facebook* users and were widely shared online, especially around May 2014 when China placed HYSY 981 into waters near the Paracel Islands. Secondly, there are *Facebook* communities dedicated to the dispute, such as "Truong Sa – Hoang Sa la cua Viet Nam" ("Spratly – Paracel Islands belong to Vietnam"), which has over 88,000 "likes", and "Truong Sa va Hoang Sa la cua Viet Nam!!! Do la su that khong the choi cai" ("Spratly and Paracel Islands belong to Vietnam!!! It is the indisputable truth"), which has over 19,000 "likes". These *Facebook* pages share various articles and posts on China's activities in the South China Sea for its community of netizens to see and comment on. Finally, the comment sections of articles published on the official websites *Thanh Nien News* have attracted the opinions of a number of Vietnam netizens (*Thanh Nien News* 2014g, 2014h). Therefore, it is clear that Vietnamese non-official discourse pertaining to Vietnam's dispute with China over maritime territory in the South China Sea is fervent. Moreover, the anti-

China narrative on *Facebook* is striking. Chinese companies and products have also been strongly criticised on *Facebook* groups and pages. China has been compared to the Nazis or ISIS, and many posts warn netizens about anything “Made in China”. The discourse also involves elements of violence as Vietnamese netizens call on Hanoi to unite with other Southeast Asian nations being bullied by China and resist its aggression through force. While there is no outright call for war with China, many commentators have explicitly demanded that the Vietnamese government stand up to China using military might. The non-official discourse pertaining to Vietnam’s dispute with China over maritime territory in the South China Sea also contains references to history. On “Bien Dong” (“East Sea”), a public *Facebook* group dedicated to Vietnam’s sovereignty claims in the South China Sea, there is a video compilation of images showing Vietnam at war and Vietnamese soldiers going to fight. The fact that the video begins with a propaganda poster of Vietnam making a fist at a greedy and savage-looking China shows that it is a reference to history with a narrative of pride. One user, Doan Quang Minh, said that throughout its history, Vietnam has always been embroiled in conflict against a mightier foe: France and the US, against whom it emerged the victor, and now China. That said, a victimisation narrative is also discernable in the non-official discourse. Many netizens on *Facebook* argue that the Vietnamese have been through enough and that they have fought long and hard for their nation. Other comments say that after years of war and suffering, Vietnamese people now want to live in peace and cooperate. Thus, a narrative of pride is superimposed with a narrative of victimisation.

There have also been protests surrounding Vietnam’s dispute with China. Non-official expressions of nationalism about Vietnam’s maritime territorial dispute with China in the South China Sea began to build up in intensity when peaceful anti-China protests were organised by Vietnamese netizens, mainly on *Facebook* (You and Paddock 2014). Thus, on 11 May 2014, tens of thousands of Vietnamese people took to the streets in Hanoi, Hue City, Da Nang City, and Ho Chi Minh City to protest China’s placement of HYSY 981 in waters claimed by Vietnam. The overarching theme during these protests was clearly the anti-foreign narrative. Protesters branded banners and placards telling China to “back off”. Chinese people were portrayed as invaders and even pirates as protesters branded Chinese flags with pictures of pirate skulls (*South China Morning Post* 2014; Ives and Fuller 2014; *Asian Correspondent* 2014; BBC 2014). The initially peaceful anti-China movement began to escalate when Vietnamese protesters turned to supposedly Chinese-owned businesses and fac-

tories to show their displeasure. On 12 May, anti-China protests began to escalate at South Vietnam’s large industrial parks. A Taiwanese-owned shoe factory was burned down and a Chinese worker was killed. These riots in southern Vietnam hit hundreds of foreign-owned companies. Vietnamese protesters beat, smashed, looted and burned anything that was allegedly Chinese-owned. Explicit expressions of hatred towards Chinese people continued to escalate when riots at a Taiwanese steel plant site killed more victims (You and Paddock 2014). Over 20 Chinese were killed during these riots before the Vietnamese authorities intervened (*Reuters* 2014). The protests in Vietnam following China’s placement of the HYSY 981 oil rig in disputed waters were violent at the utmost degree.

Table 5. The Typology of Nationalism According to Vietnam’s Dispute with China

CRITERIA A	NATURE OF OFFICIAL DISCOURSE ON THE DISPUTE	
PRESENCE OF A FERVENT DISCOURSE		YES
Presence of anti-foreign narrative		
Involvement of violence		
REFERENCES TO HISTORY		NO
Victimisation narrative		
Pride narrative		
CRITERIA B	NATURE OF NON-OFFICIAL DISCOURSE ON THE DISPUTE	
PRESENCE OF A FERVENT DISCOURSE		YES
Presence of anti-foreign narrative		X
Involvement of violence		X
REFERENCES TO HISTORY		YES
Victimisation narrative		X
Pride narrative		X
CRITERIA C	NATURE OF PROTESTS CONCERNING THE DISPUTE	
PRESENCE OF PROTESTS		YES
Presence of anti-foreign narrative		X
Involvement of violence		X
REFERENCES TO HISTORY		YES
Victimisation narrative		
Pride narrative		X

Note: Dispute type 3 – dispute with a traditionally stronger rival.

References to history are implicit in the protests. By exhibiting their pride and love for the nation, Vietnamese people showed that they no longer tolerate China's dominance over their nation. For Vietnamese people, China's 2000-year-long overlordship is long gone. This sentiment is distinguishable by banners and placards identifying China as an invader. One protester brandished a printed out placard with the slogan "Get Real. Imperialism is so 19th Century" (*South China Morning Post* 2014). This, combined with the numerous protesters brandishing Vietnamese flags and singing the national anthem and revolutionary songs, suggests that the Vietnamese are proud to show that they will no longer suffer what they consider bullying from their mightier neighbour and will not be subordinate to China as they were in the past. Thus, references to history during Vietnam's May 2014 protests carry a narrative of pride and no allusions to victimisation.

Table 5 summarises the testing of Vietnam's dispute with China over maritime territory in the South China Sea – a territorial dispute with a traditionally stronger rival – against Criteria A, B and C.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the above analysis that expressions of nationalism in autocracies such as China and Vietnam are sensitive to the context that triggers them. Both China and Vietnam generate different typologies of nationalism from one territorial dispute to another. This indicates that context is a conditioning factor and deserves greater attention in studies of nationalism in autocracies. In light of the geopoliticisation of nationalism, it is surprising that scholars of nationalism in autocracies do not pay closer attention to territorial disputes. Instead, they focus on the structural characteristics of autocracies as conditioning factors of nationalism. As such, what scholars have done thus far is examine nationalism in autocracies through discourse analysis in order to explain their variations to different degrees of intensity, while taking into account historical consciousness and the interplay between state and society. However, structural characteristics do not provide sufficient explanation for variations in expressions of nationalism. Therefore, this paper builds on the existing literature of nationalism in autocracies and seeks to further enhance the field by factoring in the role of territorial disputes in triggering different typologies of nationalism.

The emphasis on territorial disputes as a conditioning factor for nationalism has been made by highlighting variations in expressions of nationalism in China and Vietnam over four territorial disputes. The

analytical framework set out above shows that typologies of nationalism vary from one dispute to another. Furthermore, there appears to be a rough typological pattern over the three types of disputes where some of the criteria of expressions of nationalism are similar, if not completely identical. Indeed, for dispute type 1 – a dispute with a traditionally weaker rival – expressions of nationalism at the official level and through the absence of protests correspond. Expressions of nationalism at the non-official level, however, do not present any typological patterns. For dispute type 2 (a dispute with a rival whose relative strength has varied throughout history) and dispute type 3 (a dispute with a traditionally stronger rival), similar patterns emerge. Therefore, dispute types 2 and 3 can be combined to examine typological patterns. Expressions of nationalism correspond at the non-official level and in the presence of protests, but not at the official level. Overall, the most striking typological patterns are the presence/absence of protests. Expressions of nationalism are escalated to that level of intensity only in disputes with a rival whose relative strength has varied throughout history or where the rival is traditionally stronger. That said, whether a type of dispute generates a fixed typology of nationalism is not as clear cut as the observation that expressions of nationalism are sensitive to the dispute in question. Therefore, what can be concluded with certainty is that the context surrounding a particular dispute creates a distinct typology of nationalism.

Why do territorial disputes with traditionally stronger rivals or with a rival whose relative strength has varied throughout history generate more intense typologies of nationalism with an escalation to public protests? The answer to this question will have profound implications for the field of international relations. Strong nationalism can provoke the escalation of a territorial dispute to dangerous levels and risk a break-out into armed conflict caused by mistakes, misunderstandings or misperceptions. Thus, my emphasis in this paper on context triggering expressions of nationalism does not rule out the relevance of structural characteristics as conditioning factors of nationalism in autocracies. Like societal institutions, regime type and historical consciousness, context is also a conditioning factor of nationalism in China and Vietnam. Future studies that seek to build an analytical framework for typologies of nationalism in autocracies should include as many conditioning factors as possible in order to build a solid framework of potential typologies of nationalism in an autocracy.

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