

***Bridging Troubled Waters: China, Japan, and Maritime Order in the East China Sea.* By James Manicom. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2014. Softcover: 266pp.**

In this book, James Manicom contests the orthodox view that the strategic rivalry between China and Japan will escalate into a full-blown military conflict. The book concedes that the East China Sea will be the likely medium for Sino–Japanese military rivalry and cyclical tensions will persist; however, it makes the compelling case that cooperation will endure.

The book explores the intriguing relationship between China and Japan, which has been paradoxically characterized by deep economic interdependence, yet beleaguered by periodic tensions over their maritime disputes, lingering strategic mistrust and even brinkmanship. The book examines the origins, nature and durability of cooperation between China and Japan despite historical and existing conflicting interests between the two countries. The author interrogates an interesting question in International Relations theory on how China and Japan have avoided conflict over their maritime disputes, notwithstanding the seemingly incessant military posturing and sabre-rattling at sea and yet managed to cooperate while resisting settlement of underlying issues. The book explores this central point in depth by comparing five attempts at cooperation in the East China Sea in the areas of disputed sovereignty, fisheries management, marine surveys, and hydrocarbon resource development.

Throughout the book, Manicom makes it clear that he does not share the cynicism expressed by scholars that disputes over resource-rich maritime space are fundamentally prone to conflict. Indeed, lurking in every corner of the book is Manicom’s insightful, if but slightly overarticulated, thesis that, “contrary to pessimistic assessments, the two countries have been able to cooperate on contested jurisdiction when material issues have been separate from the more symbolic aspects of their relationship” (p. 11). This is not to disparage the central empirical finding of the book, however. In fact, the simplicity of Manicom’s proposition belies its innovation. The focus of the book on cooperation, while not an entirely novel approach, is quite refreshing in the study of China–Japan maritime relations. His thesis also leaves the reader cautiously optimistic, which is a rare commodity these days.

In order to support the book’s provocative core insights, Manicom presents important and interesting case studies that reveal historical

commonalities worthy of sustained reflection. The first case study (Chapter 2) examines the dynamics of crisis and tension management in the context of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute, and the collapse of Deng Xiaoping's formulaic *modus vivendi* to focus on joint development instead of actively pursuing sovereignty claims. The second case study, in Chapter 3, assesses the China–Japan agreement on fisheries — signed in 1997 and which came into force in 2000 — which illustrates an example of reciprocal cooperation over an area of mutual interest. The third case study (Chapter 4), explores the 2001 notification agreement over marine surveys in disputed waters. The fourth case study in Chapter 5, traces the confrontational dynamics of resource development in the East China Sea, principally a resource exploitation agreement in 2008, which to date has yet to be implemented. In his analysis of these case studies, Manicom's basic argument is that cooperation underwritten by mutually shared economic interests is easier to achieve compared to cooperation based on strategic issues. In this regard, putting the above cases of cooperation in a continuum, the fisheries agreement is both robust and durable, while the notification agreement is less successful relative to the 2001 resource development agreement.

The theoretical appeal of this book lies in its innovative introduction of the Maritime Value Matrix (MVM) “as a way to conceptualize the salience of disputed maritime space to leaders at a given time” (p. 28). The MVM distinguishes maritime space as being important at two levels: first, for tangible and intangible reasons; and second, whether the disputed space is salient to one party or both parties. The MVM is useful as a tool of analysis, as is used in the book, by locating the “areas of common and disputed interest vis-à-vis a given disputed issue in the maritime relationship” which in turn “informs the analysis of the sources of cooperation by identifying the incentives and disincentives for cooperation” (p. 28). According to the logic of this theoretical model, cooperation over shared issues that are considered “intrinsic-intangible” (such as economic or resource-related matters) are more straightforward and will be reciprocally pursued, resulting in more formal, lasting and enforceable agreements (p. 31). On the other hand, cooperation over “relational-intangible” issues will result in “informal cooperation with little enforcement, and be tenuous at best” (p. 32) compared to cooperation over “relational-intangible” issues which are pursued coercively and often result in short-lived, informal agreements. Of course, Manicom is quick to add that the “operationalization of different aspects of disputed space represents ideal types” and he

recognizes that “these issue areas do not exist in a vacuum but often occupy the same space and time” (p. 33). Nevertheless, on the whole, Manicom marshals enough evidence in aggregate to make his MVM convincing.

Throughout the work, the author maintains a balanced outlook and a clear, strictly objective voice that matches his rigorous research and solid scholarship. The book is a joy to read and does not have the pretentious tones of a tedious text, despite its apparent scholarly nature. The book is a timely reminder that cooperation between strategic adversaries over disputed maritime territory is possible, and could be potentially durable and enduring. Manicom’s book is an invitation to look beyond the obvious and immediate conflicts and consider what underpins and sustains cooperation, and how tension and conflict over disputed maritime space could be managed and conflict avoided. In this sense, *Bridging Troubled Waters* seems to raise far more questions than it answers, but it answers just enough to provide a platform for further study. However, the book’s intention, as Manicom spells out from the beginning, is to examine “the ebb and flow of cooperation between two rivals over disputed maritime space” in order to “inform expectations and policies about ongoing dispute management processes and cooperation over emerging issues in the Sino-Japanese maritime relationship” (p. 15); and on this score, it delivers.

Yet, however questionable Manicom’s innovative central thesis of cooperation between China and Japan will withstand the test of time, doubts about *Bridging Troubled Waters* should be put aside. Manicom has written an outstandingly erudite and carefully researched book. It will surely remain of interest to academics, diplomats, political theorists, and scholars for years to come.

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