

Explaining U.S. Distrust of China's Military Modernization*

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Introduction

Although U.S. distrust of China has been there since the establishment of PRC, U.S. has been mainly focusing on practical issues with China, rather than addressing distrust. There are three main reasons for U.S. ignorance of distrust. First, the U.S.-China relations had been fundamentally stable because of interdependence and both states' preoccupations of domestic affairs.¹ Second, uncertainty of others' intentions could be dismissed if the level of potential risk is acceptable and there are cooperative or deterrent means persuading others, e.g. China, to do the right thing.² Third, a state's expansionist intentions can be thwarted by the combination of domestic weakness and foreign resistance.³

The paper agrees that interdependence and stable power structure can provide stability between states, even between those with distrust, while trust and distrust become important factors in determining the outcomes of relations in transition where the rising power has gained significant might that is capable to challenge the status quo. And that is the case of the current U.S.-China relationship. After the

global financial crisis and China's rise as the second largest economy, U.S. became more sensitive about China's intentions, as it worried that China would take advantage of the vulnerability and undermine U.S. efforts to recover.⁴ China's increasing military modernization and the establishment of variant China-led regional institutions led to the speculation that China intends to replace U.S. as the dominant power in Asia.⁵ Facing the difficulty of managing the relationship, which is at the critical period of transition, and the likelihood to fall into the 'Thucydides Trap' because of distrust, U.S. leadership accepted the China's proposal to build 'new type of great power relations', of which the first step is to build trust.

The paper suggests that in order to build trust, the two sides must know the factors that cause distrust. As the problem of trust between U.S. and China are big and complex issue, the paper is to analyze the sources of distrust from U.S. side and focuses on the sensitive area of China's military modernization. The following paragraphs are divided into two parts, the theoretical part and the empirical one. The theoretical part briefly reviews the trust literature in U.S.-China relations and introduces three theoretical understandings of trust and distrust. The empirical part is case study, in which the paper examines U.S. distrust towards China's military modernization in details through all three theoretical perspectives.

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¹ David M. Lampton, 'Power Constrained: Sources of Mutual Strategic Suspicion in U.S.-China Relations', in *NBR Analysis*, Vol. 93 (2010), p. 6.

² David M. Edelstein, 'Managing Uncertainty: Belief about Intentions and the Rise of Great Powers', in *Security Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2002), pp. 1-40.

³ June Teufel Dreyer, 'China's Power and Will: The PRC's Military Strength and Grand Strategy', in *Orbis*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (2007), pp. 651-664.

⁴ Kenneth Lieberthal & Jisi Wang, 'Addressing U.S.-China Strategic Distrust', *John L. Thornton Center Monograph Series*, No. 4 (2012), p. 23.

⁵ Zheng Wang, 'China's Alternative Diplomacy', *The Diplomat*, 30 January 2015, online at <http://thediplomat.com/2015/01/chinas-alternative-diplomacy/> (last accessed 20 February 2015)

Distrust in U.S.-China relations: literature and theories

The existing literature examining U.S. distrust towards China's military rise mainly took a rational calculative approach and focused on the material side of the picture, such as China's rising military expenditure⁶, China's effort in acquiring advanced weapon systems⁷, or China's acquisition of weapons that are perceived as particularly targeting U.S. military in Asia⁸. The paper suggests that there are mainly two weaknesses of the hardware-orientated, calculative perspective. First, it misses the essential element of trust or distrust, intention. Material power does not tell anything without considering how state will use that power.⁹ Second, the calculative perspective only depicts partial picture of the problem of distrust in U.S.-China relationship, as there are other sources of distrust that are independent from rational calculation, such as institutional and normative factors. The remaining part of this section will provide a theoretical framework that can depict a comprehensive picture of U.S. distrust towards China's military rise.

Trust is trustor's belief that the trustee intends to do what is beneficial or right¹⁰, similarly distrust is the belief that the trustee intends to do what is detrimental or wrong. Although there is insufficient literature on distrust in international relations, the paper builds the analysis framework for distrust using trust literature, as distrust can be regarded as the opposite of trust and the same category of factors that lead to trust can also lead to distrust. The existing literature on trust provides three different understandings. The first is rationalist approach, or trust-as-predictability, which stresses the importance of

mutual interest in establishing trusting relationship.¹¹ The second understanding is fiduciary approach, or trust-as-binding, which focuses on the notion of the obligation to honour commitment and rules in producing to trust between players.¹² The third approach emphasizes interpersonal feelings, or individual psychologies in affecting trust between states.¹³

The paper agrees with the first understanding of trust, while notices that there are actually two kinds of obligations for the fiduciary approach, the institutional obligation and normative obligation. Institutional obligation usually derives from formal and legalistic mechanisms between actors.¹⁴ Normative obligation stems from shared rules and norms among players, which are not necessarily legally binding, but it is regarded as right to follow them.¹⁵ The paper plays down the third approach and does not incorporate individual factor in the analysis, because relations at individual level are not equal to inter-state relationships. For example, although President George Bush commented warmly about President Putin and regarded him as trustworthy¹⁶, no one would categorize U.S.-Russia relationship as trusting. While President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu have awkward personal relationship¹⁷, no one would

⁶ Karl W. Eikenberry, 'Does China Threaten Asia-Pacific Regional Stability?', in *Parameters*, Vol. 25 (1995), pp. 82-103.

⁷ Edward Timperlake, & William C. Triplett II, *Red Dragon Rising: Communist China's Military Threat to America*, (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 1999); Lampton, 'Power Constrained', pp. 19-22.

⁸ Lieberthal & Wang, 'Addressing U.S.-China Strategic Distrust', pp. 29-30.

⁹ Lampton, 'Power Constrained', p. 10.

¹⁰ Aaron M. Hoffman, 'A Conceptualization of Trust in International Relations', in *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 8 (2002), p. 375.

¹¹ Ken Booth & Nicholas Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation and Trust in World Politics* (London & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 229. Jan Ruzicka & Nicholas J. Wheeler, 'The Puzzle of Trusting Relationship in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty', in *International Affairs*, Vol. 86, No. 1 (2010), pp. 72-74.

¹² Aaron M. Hoffman, *Building Trust: Overcoming Suspicion in International Conflict* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005), pp. 20, 137-139.

¹³ Jonathan Mercer, 'Rationality and Psychology in International Politics', in *International Relations*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (2005), pp. 77-106.

¹⁴ Lynne G. Zucker, 'Production of Trust: Institutional Sources of Economic Structure, 1840-1920', in *Research in Organizational Behaviour*, Vol. 8 (1986), pp. 53-111.

¹⁵ Martin Hollis, *Trust within Reason* (Cambridge, New York, etc: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 10.

¹⁶ Caroline Wyatt, 'Bush and Putin: Best of friends', *BBC News*, 16 June 2001, online at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1392791.stm> (last accessed 21 February 2015)

¹⁷ Y. L. Guernigou, 'Sarkozy Tells Obama Netanyahu is a "Liar"', *Reuters*, 8 November 2011, online at <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2011/11/08/us-mideast-netanyahu-sarkozy-idUSTRE7A720120111108> (last accessed 24 February 2015)

deny that U.S.-Israeli relationship is not a trusting one.

Although each of the rationalist, institutional, and normative approaches can explain trust and distrust between states independently, the paper adopts a combined approach, as all three approaches are 'necessary to understand the origins, dynamics and future possibilities of' trust and the distinction between them is more analytical than empirical.¹⁸ With a mixed approach, the paper will be able to provide a complete explanation of U.S. distrust towards China's military modernization. The following paragraphs will discuss respectively how each theoretical perspective explains trust and distrust in international relations.

The first theoretical understanding of trust and distrust is the rationalist approach, which stresses the calculation of interests in producing trust or distrust. To believe that a potential trusted state will do something beneficial, the potential trusting state needs to be confirmed that the result will also benefit the potential trusted state. It is clear that the rationalist approach relies on the incentive element in determining the trustworthiness of other states. The incentive element is termed as 'encapsulated interest' by Russell Hardin, according to whom, 'I trust you because... you have your own interests in taking my interests into account. That is, you encapsulate my interests in your own interest.'¹⁹ Thus, for rationalist, mutual interests help produce trust between states, while the lack of mutual interests, or the existence of contradictory interests lead to suspicion and distrust.

The second theoretical understanding of trust and distrust is the institutional approach, which emphasizes the importance of formal rules and principles in establishing trusting relationship. Institutions are "persistent and connected sets of rules that prescribe behavioural roles, constrain activity, and shape expectations"²⁰. Institutions produce trust by creating a sense of

obligation and credible commitment between states. The higher the level of institutionalization is, the stronger the sense of obligation can be felt, which leads to higher level of trust. On the contrary, low level of institutionalization leads to weak sense of obligation, which results in low level of trust, suspicion or distrust. High level of institutionalization also serve as channels for effective communication, which can increase mutual understanding and comprehension through sharing information about each other's capabilities, intentions, and strategies.²¹ Whereas low level of institutionalization reduces the effectiveness of communication and gives states more reasons to suspect, hedge, and distrust.

The third theoretical understanding of trust is the normative approach, which focuses on shared rules and norms in producing trust. The rules and norms provide a standard from which they can generate expectations, evaluate the behaviour of others, and determine the legitimate range of actions etc.²² Trust in a normative sense means the belief that the potential trusted state will follow rules or will do what is 'right', 'just', or 'correct', of which the meanings are shared between the two sides.²³ The rules here do not need to be formal treaties or explicit commitment, but usually takes the forms of custom, established practice, moral or operational rules, which are important source of formal rules in institutions.²⁴ With shared rules and norms, each state has an obligation to do things in the right way. The obligation is moral in nature and is different from the one among states in an institution, where the obligation is usually in a legal sense and takes a contractual form. For instance, allies trust each other because they have treaty obligation towards each other, thus they would expect member states' help when they are

¹⁸ Ruzicka, & Wheeler, 'The Puzzle of Trusting', p. 74.

¹⁹ Russell Hardin, *Trust and Trustworthiness* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002), p. 1.

²⁰ Robert O. Keohane, 'International Institutions: Two Approaches', in *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (1988), p. 383.

²¹ Robert O. Keohane & Lisa L. Martin, 'The Promise of Institutional Theory', in *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1995), pp. 41-46.

²² Bruce Cronin, *Community under Anarchy: Transnational Identity and the Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 8-9.

²³ Hollis, *Trust within Reason*, p. 10.

²⁴ Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: MacMillan Press, 1995), pp. 64-65.

under attack or the threat of attack. States with shared values and norms can also trust each other and expect support when certain rules or norms, such as freedom of expression, democratic governance, are violated. States may not have treaty obligation to defend those rules and values, but they will do out of moral obligation, because they have a feeling a common fate in it and they consider it as the right or just thing to do. On the contrary, states without shared rules or norms cannot trust each other, as the potential trusting state cannot expect the potential trusted state to do the right thing, or it may even expect the trustee to do the wrong thing when their follow contradictory rules and norms.

China's military modernization and U.S. distrust

Supported by its growing economy and centralized political structure, China's military has undergone decade-long continuous modernization, with the defense budget grows faster than economic growth.

China's military modernization can be better assessed with the "three pillar" method, which examines the material, institutional, and doctrinal aspects of the military modernization process.²⁵ The material modernization is mainly reflected in the acquisition of modern missiles, aircrafts, submarines, and surface ships, the advancement in space and counter-space ability and the improvement in information warfare capability. The institutional modernization includes reforms to the organizational structure, and training and educational system, the standardization of training techniques among different service units in order to achieve joint and integrate operation, the increasing educational criteria for officer recruitment, and the creation of a corps of non-commissioned officers (NCOs) so that the military can be better prepared for the high-tech environment of modern warfare. The doctrinal modernization involves the introduction and implementation of new

²⁵ David M. Finkelstein, 'China's National Military Strategy: An Overview of the Military Strategic Guidelines', in Roy Kamphausen & Andrew Scobell, *Right-Sizing the People's Liberation Army: Exploring the Contours of China's Military* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2007), p. 70.

military missions, such as building a "blue water" navy to protect marine sovereignty, and new operational concepts, such as joint fighting, and counter-intervention operation etc.²⁶

The U.S. distrust towards China's military modernization is reflected in military responses, export regulations, and diplomatic efforts.

In order to strengthen U.S. position and reassure its allies and partners, U.S. pledges to improve its force deployment in the region, especially naval force, both quantitatively and qualitatively.²⁷ In order to counter China's development in asymmetrical warfare capability and maintain the ability to get access to and operate freely in the region, U.S. proposes the Joint Operation Access Concept (JOAC)²⁸, which is implemented by the more specific "Air Sea Battle" (ASB) concept²⁹.

Apart from military reactions, U.S. also engages actively trying to slow down China's military rise through export control. U.S. has in place two systems of export control on goods and technologies to China. The export of military-use goods and technologies, terms as "munitions list" items, is strictly prohibited. And the export of so-called dual-use items is under control.

Besides from its own export control of military and dual-use items, U.S. is also concerned of China getting access to these sensitive goods and technologies through third party. By threatening to withdraw foreign aid or to block access to U.S. defence and high-tech programmes, U.S. successfully persuades Israel not to provide further military assistance to

²⁶ U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China* (2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014).

²⁷ Ronald O'Rourke, 'China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities-Background and Issues for Congress', *CRS Report RL 33153* (10 April 2014), p. 42.

²⁸ U.S. Department of Defense, 'Sustaining the U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense' (January 2012), p. 4.

²⁹ Air-Sea Battle Office, U.S. Navy, 'Air-Sea Battle: Service Collaboration to Address Anti-Access/Area Denial Challenges' (May 2013).

China³⁰ and prevents EU from lifting its embargo on trade in arms with China³¹.

Explanations of U.S.'s distrust of China's military modernization

As has been discussed, the analysis of U.S. distrust is conducted in a framework that combines three theoretical explanations in order to provide a complete picture of the problem. The rationalist explanation focuses on the material impact of China's military modernization and how that modernization can negatively affect U.S. national interests. According to the institutional perspective, the low level of institutionalization between U.S. and China, which is reflected in the low level of recurrent military dialogues and the fragility of communication channels, is the source of distrust, as low level of institutionalization lead to weak sense of institutional obligation. Based on the normative approach, the U.S. distrust towards China is the result of increasingly assertive military behaviours aimed at defending its disputed and controversial sovereign claims in East and South China Sea, which lead U.S. to believe that China is an unsatisfied revisionist power, rather than a satisfied status quo power. The following sections will examine these explanations in details.

Rationalist explanation

Rationalists usually take a calculation approach towards trust and distrust. Based on the calculative approach, U.S. distrusts because China's military modernization contradicts U.S. national interests in three ways, by posing threat to U.S. allies and partners in Asia, by putting U.S. forces in East Asia at risk, and by challenging U.S. led order and leadership.

Given China's territorial disputes with U.S. allies and partners in the region, China's military modernization, especially its naval modernization, is inevitably perceived as a

threat. As most of these maritime neighbors are either the allies or partners of U.S., the threat to them is also considered to be a threat to U.S. For example, although U.S. shifted its recognition from Taiwan to China, every U.S. administration has expressed security commitment explicitly or tactically to Taiwan since its split off from mainland in 1949. The successful transition from authoritarian rule to democracy makes Taiwan an even more valuable partner for U.S. in the region. Although U.S. does not support the de jure independence of Taiwan, U.S. has interest and commitment to maintain the status quo before peaceful solution can be found. Thus the growing cross-strait military imbalance raises U.S. concerns, as China's threat to Taiwan is also a threat to U.S. Similarly the shifting balance of military power in Asia, which is in China's favour, is contradictory with U.S.

Efforts of Chinese military modernization, especially the development of anti-access/area denial capability, are perceived as specifically targeting U.S. forces and bases in East Asia. China's counter intervention capability limits U.S. freedom of operation in international water and puts its surface ships and regional naval bases at risk. China's asymmetrical warfare capability also restricts U.S. ability to carry out its treaty obligations and security commitment to its regional allies and partners.

As the only hegemon in the international system, U.S. is content about its position and is determined to maintain its position well into the twenty first century. As U.S. relies heavily on its military supremacy in sustaining its leadership, it is sensitive to any other military rise that may challenge its supremacy. Therefore China's military modernization, given its rapid pace and comprehensive scope, will inevitably drive suspicion and distrust on U.S. side. China is actively acquiring sensitive technologies, such as anti-access/area denial and other asymmetrical warfare technologies, new generation stealth fighter technologies, nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines, which can be used to affect U.S. operation and challenge U.S. position in the region. China's rapid military rise disrupts regional military balance, poses threat to Taiwan and other U.S. allies in Pacific region, if unchecked, it would lead to

³⁰ Wade Boese, 'Israeli Arms Exports to China of Growing Concern to U.S.', *Arms Control Association*, 1 March 2003, online at http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2003_03/isralexportsmar03 (last accessed 25 February 2015).

³¹ Russell Ong, *China's Security Interests in the 21st Century* (Abingdon & New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 38.

reordering of relationships and alliance system that might not be in U.S. interest³², as shifting military balance between U.S. and China might lead regional states to consider whether to make foreign policies closer to U.S. or China.

Institutional explanation: low level of institutionalization

Unlike the rationalist explanation, the institutional explanation does not look at the extent of the military growth or the offensiveness of the weapons states acquire, but looks at the level of institutionalization between them. From the institutional perspective, U.S. distrust towards China's military modernization is the result of low level of institutionalization, which is reflected in the insufficiency and vulnerability of U.S.-China Military-to-Military Dialogues.

Insufficiency of U.S.-China military-to-military dialogues

The insufficiency of U.S.-China military communication is reflected in the facts that there are only three low level recurrently held military-to-military dialogues between them, and there is no mechanism of dialogue for crisis.

Given the size of U.S. and China's militaries and their significance in regional peace and stability, it is surprising that there are only four recurrently held military dialogues, the Defense Consultative Talks (DCT), the U.S.-China Strategic Security Dialogue under U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue, the Defense Policy Coordination Talks (DPCT), and Military Maritime Consultative Agreement (MMCA). The former two are the highest level of talks, which are at deputy-ministerial level. The relatively low level of dialogues is inevitably not enough to address issues of strategic importance. Although there are meetings between Defense Minister and Chief of Staff from both sides, those contacts are not institutionalized.

³² U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *USCC 2005 Annual Report to Congress* (Washington DC, 2005), p. 133.

Although attention has been given on the potential role for MMCA to manage crisis and address tension, there has no agreement on setting up meeting during crisis or rule of engagement.³³ The difficulty of communication during high tensions is reflected in the EP-3 incident, 2001. After the collision of planes, instead of holding crisis talks, China suspended military-to-military contact. The then U.S. ambassador to China Admiral Prueher was frustrated when neither the Ministry of Foreign Affairs nor the PLA answered the phone or return phone calls in the immediate after the collision.³⁴ China held information about the collision for two days before accusing U.S. as hegemon and violating its sovereignty by sending the "spy plane" to its territorial waters.³⁵ For U.S., China's action misled its population and the outside world, and undermined the diplomatic efforts of U.S.

Vulnerability of U.S.-China military-to-military dialogues

Apart from the insufficiency of military dialogues, their vulnerability also contributes to U.S. suspicion and distrust.

The U.S.-China military-to-military contacts can be easily suspended by China as punitive measures to express its displeasure towards U.S. For example, in protest to the Bush Administration's notification to Congress of arms sales to Taiwan in November 2007, China cancelled the annual meeting of the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement and denied port visits at Hong Kong by U.S. aircraft carrier group led by USS Kitty Hawk.³⁶ Similarly, China responded to the U.S. administration's October 2008 notification of arms sales to Taiwan by cancelling or postponing military exchanges and blocking U.S. ships' port visits. The relationship did not resume until the February 2009 visit of

³³ Shirley A. Kan, 'U.S.-China Military Contacts: Issues for Congress', *CRS Report RL 32496* (29 July 2014), p. 27.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *USCC 2007 Annual Report to Congress*, (Washington DC, 2007), p. 271.

³⁶ Shirley A. Kan, 'Taiwan: Major U.S. Arms Sales Since 1990s', *CRS Report RL30957* (29 August 2014), p. 44.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.³⁷ And again in response to the January 2010 U.S. announcements of arms sales to Taiwan, China postponed deputy ministerial level meetings on international security, arms control, and non-proliferation issue³⁸, the relationship did not resume until late 2010³⁹.

Although China has continuously expressed its desire to improve the military relations, China's responses of periodically taking military-to-military exchanges as hostage indicate China's instrumental attitude towards military dialogues, which in U.S. view does not contribute to understanding and trust.

Normative explanation

The normative approach focuses on shared rules and norms in producing trust between states. According to the normative approach, trust is the belief that the potential trusted state will do what is "right", or "just", while distrust is to the belief that the potential trustee will not do what it right. Unlike the rationalist and institutional understandings, normative trust is not based on self-interest computation or contractual forms of obligation, but is based on a moral sense of obligation to protect the common good. Based on the normative understanding, there are mainly two sources of U.S. distrust towards China, the lack of transparency of China's military modernization and China's revisionist behaviours in the region.

Although there is no treaty obligation on China's side to share information, U.S. believes it is only right that China provide plausible explanation for its rapid military build-up.⁴⁰ As

³⁷ K. McNeil, 'Long-Delayed Arms Sales to Taiwan Announced', *Arms Control Association*, 4 November 2008, online at <http://www.armscontrol.org/print/3420> (last accessed 26 February 2015)

³⁸ 'China Balks at U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan', *CBSNEWS*, 30 January 2010, online at <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/china-balks-at-us-arms-sales-to-taiwan/>

³⁹ U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress* (2011), pp. 53-54.

⁴⁰ 'Rumsfeld: China Buildup Threat to Asia. U.S. Defense Chief Chides Military Growth, Position on Taiwan', *Associated Press*, 4 June 2005, online at <http://www.nbcnews.com/id/8091198#.VNZOZvmsWCK> (last accessed 27 February 2015).

a rising power that has great regional influence, China needs to be more transparent in order to address its regional neighbours' concerns. According to U.S., there is a moral obligation for China to increase transparency in order to be considered as responsible.⁴¹ However, China's continuous opacity about its military modernization results in U.S. suspicion and distrust.

Apart from the lack of transparency, China's increasingly assertive maritime behaviours also cause U.S. distrust as these behaviours are considered as revisionist and contradict rules and norms that U.S. has believed in.

China's military modernization is accompanied by assertiveness, especially after the global financial crisis. According to observers, China used to justify its assertive behaviours by citing provocative actions of other states, which made China's behaviours "more retaliatory than purely belligerent".⁴² However, China's new assertiveness is usually self-initiated rather than reactive. For example, in South China Sea, China increases its physical presence significantly through land reclamation and China simply justifies its action by claiming its "indisputable sovereignty" over the islands and adjacent waters.⁴³

Although U.S. is not a member of UN Convention on the Law of Sea, it shares the rules and norms containing in it. Thus, U.S. does not recognize China's newly declared ADIZ and its sovereign claim in South China Sea. And U.S. considers China's assertive behaviours as normatively wrong, and as reflection of China's revisionist intention to alter the status quo.

⁴¹ Glenn Kessler, 'U.S. Says China Must Address its Intentions', *Washington Post*, 22 September 2005, online at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/09/21/AR2005092101912.html> (last accessed 19 February 2015).

⁴² Ely Ratner, 'China Undeterred and Unapologetic', *War on the Rocks*, 24 June 2014, online at <http://warontherocks.com/2014/06/china-undeterred-and-unapologetic/> (last accessed 20 February 2015).

⁴³ 'China Says South China Sea Land Reclamation "Justified"', *BBC News*, 10 September 2014 online at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-29139125> (last accessed 27 February 2015).

Conclusion

By applying the mixed approach to examine U.S. distrust towards China's military modernization, the paper shows that China's military rise is not just a rationalist problem, but is also an institutional problem, as well as a normative problem. By clearly identifying the sources of distrust, the paper provides directions for both sides to build trust in their military relations. Researchers can also apply the theoretical framework to examine U.S. distrust towards China's economic rise, as well as its diplomatic rise. With the same framework, students can also analyse China's distrust towards U.S. in variant areas.

Although the paper believes that the framework to analyse distrust presented here is also suitable as a framework for trust-building, the paper does not see U.S.-China relationship as a good case study for the testing, as the bilateral relationship is still a distrusting one. A good case for testing a framework of trusting building is the European integration after the Second World War, which is accompanied by efforts of strengthening mutual interest, building institutions, and finding shared values and norms. Further research will be done to test the suitability of the framework for trust-building. If proved, it is more plausible to suggest that addressing the rationalist, institutional, and normative factors that cause distrust between U.S. and China is the right direction to build trust.
