other words, international politics are probably more important in explaining Chinese foreign policy behavior vis-à-vis Japan, not least because they deeply affect debates within the CCP.

This reviewer fully agrees with the arguments in Kokubun’s introductory chapter. Against the backdrop of a slow but steady decline in language training and the use of qualitative methodologies, Kokubun makes a plea in favor of adding area studies methods to the study of comparative politics and international relations. Moreover, Kokubun’s book stands out from most Japanese scholarship because the author employs empirical information for the sake of ‘big picture’ analysis and broader arguments on Chinese foreign policy behavior. The author must be commended for his efforts in providing a panoramic perspective on the ups and downs of Chinese political reforms and politicalinvolvement since the advent of Deng, along with change in Sino-Japanese relations. The bilateral interaction is better understood in light of the first half of the book, that is, an understanding of the recurring openings and closures of Chinese politics. The argument is sufficiently novel to warrant attention from China watchers across the Pacific and in Europe. Moreover, the emphasis on area studies expertise ought to be a welcome reminder to political scientists everywhere that command of the local language and culture and an ability to secure and read primary sources are as important as knowledge of the relevant social science toolkit. It is not by chance that some of the world’s best China specialists are to be found in Japan, although many end up getting bogged down by ‘information overload’ and exaggerate the significance of primary documents at the expense of analysis. Kokubun’s harmonization of both aspects of research warrants an English translation of this book (and one is reportedly in the making through the government-sponsored Japan Library). This book is a good introduction to one of Japan’s most relevant China watchers.

One weak point of this study, however, is its atomized nature. After all, it is a collection of different essays that the author has written over the course of three decades. The coherence of Kokubun’s analysis is evident, and yet there are repetitions here and there, which the reader may find tedious. Also, for the sake of the proper harmonization of the book’s arguments, it would help to spell out the main propositions in new introductory and concluding chapters and to shape each chapter around the broader analysis. Moreover, a more decisive engagement with recent English- and Japanese-language academic literature on the topics covered would certainly enrich Kokubun’s research and place it in a broader context. All in all, however, this book is a welcome addition to the literature.

Reference

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At first glance, the title of Christian Wirth’s Danger, Development and Legitimacy in East Asian Maritime Politics might give readers an impression that this is a book that applies mainstream theories of International Relations (IR)—realism, liberalism and constructivism, respectively—to the study of
major East Asian states’ maritime policies and their interactions. Not so fast. Unlike an oft-seen practice in the IR literature that bends the data to fit the already chosen theoretical framework, Wirth’s book is empirically grounded in his long-time observation of the politics and societies in China, Japan, and South Korea. Rather than repeating the familiar mantra that ‘each theory captures some parts of the East Asian reality’, *East Asian Maritime Politics* advances a succinct and valid claim that rapid socio-economic changes under globalization have created crises of legitimacy for East Asian states in the 21st century; looking for a way out, they increasingly resort to the re-inscription of various ocean-related, multilayered borders separating external dangers from internal orders upon which elites seek to replicate their postwar developmental success stories. Unlike many established policy analysts, moreover, Wirth’s work does not rely on an army of research assistants to assemble materials from news reports, official statements and think tank analyses that conclude with ‘implications for US (or the like) foreign policy toward East Asia’. Representing a newer generation of non-Asian researchers of East Asian international relations, Wirth has not only conducted substantial field work in these three countries but also painstakingly studied their languages and obtained his PhD degree in Japan. These experiences contribute to an engaging and balanced analysis that does not privilege any particular state actor’s interest. Indeed, among the extant literature on the region’s territorial and maritime demarcation disputes, *East Asian Maritime Politics* is exceptional in its sympathy toward the East Asian peoples who are at times abused or even victimized by their own governments, whose legitimacy largely rests on their claims to protect the nation against (real or imagined) external dangers and deliver continued economic growth.

This book asks the following questions: how and why has the maritime sphere in post-Cold War East Asia ‘become imbued with increasing levels of danger’ and ‘heated up’ amid globalization? What has contributed to the absence of the ‘maritime sphere and the ocean as ecological system in its own right… from the discourse and practice of international politics?’ (p. 2). To address these questions, Wirth rightly indicates the pitfalls of narrow, dichotomized research that separates economics from politics and non-traditional from traditional security affairs. By adopting a more holistic, regional perspective, *East Asian Maritime Politics* frees its readers from such prevalent binaries as democracy/autocracy and developed/developing countries and reveals striking similarities in the approaches employed by the Chinese, Japanese, and South Korean states to maintain their legitimacy. Building on David Campbell’s (1992) conception of foreign policy as a boundary-drawing practice that constitutes the state in whose name it operates, Wirth examines the discursive (and competing) constructions of ocean-related boundaries by these states that naturalize a series of societal, national and civilizational binaries separating the prosperous, orderly and advanced ‘inside’ from the underdeveloped, dangerous and barbaric ‘outside’. Wirth finds that, rather than acknowledging the fact that they all inhabit the same ecological system and face common environmental challenges that cannot be solved by individual states, China, Japan and South Korea increasingly treat their surrounding seas both as the key to their further economic growth and the field where their security competition is being played out. The perceived rising threats from the Sea of Japan (East Sea in Korea), the Yellow Sea (West Sea in Korea), the East China Sea and the South China Sea and the subsequent efforts to secure the constructed boundaries thus indicate the extent to which these East Asian governments feel they are deficient in legitimacy.

Without resorting to the jargon of the Copenhagen School and its securitization framework (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998), *East Asian Maritime Politics* is similarly concerned with how a given issue is moved from the ordinary political process onto the security agenda. The book illustrates such securitization by looking at the roles of various securitizing actors and the importance of their ‘speech
acts’ in convincing their intended audiences of existential threats and the resulting need to implement extraordinary measures (hence ‘breaking free of rules’) against the purported threats (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998: 26). Memories of the Abe administration’s controversial (and, for some, unconstitutional) moves to legalize the deployment of the Japan Self-Defense Forces for collective self-defense purposes by narrating a ‘North Korea threat’ should remain fresh for readers (Maslow 2015). If we agree with the Copenhagen School’s conception of security as a ‘failure of normal politics’ (McDonald 2008: 566), de-securitization is desirable in terms of re-including a matter into the usual political process, helping to prevent abuses of authority at home and facilitate a shift from conflict to cooperation abroad (Aras and Polat 2008). East Asian Maritime Politics covers such empirical details that have not yet been widely acknowledged, with important implications for exploring the possibility of de-securitization. Rather than concerning ourselves with ‘the Chinese dragon’s thirst for oil’, Wirth points out that the idea of scarcity depends on not merely geological limits but also crude oil demand, supply, pricing and distribution (pp. 54–55). In fact, the deindustrialization of the Japanese economy and the resulting decline of crude oil demand since its 2005 peak already led Japanese oil corporations to integrate their supply chains with their Chinese counterparts (p. 75, n. 75). Moreover, the introduction of financial instruments into commodity markets means that the ownership of crude oil aboard a tanker may change several times before the vessel reaches its final destination. Calling for a national government to purchase rights to specific oil fields and to secure relevant ‘sea lanes of communication’ for oil shipments by its own naval forces, then, has become an out-of-date solution to supply security. But the excessive East Asian anxieties about resource scarcity have continued to lead Middle Eastern producers to attach an ‘Asian premium’ to their crude oil sold to the region (pp. 54–55).

In the journalistic accounts, the ongoing territorial disputes between Japan and its neighbors—with Russia over the Northern Territories/Southern Kuril Islands, with South Korea over the Dokdo/Takeshima Islands, and with China and Taiwan over the Diaoyu(tai)/Senkaku Islands—are often narrated as if they were driving these claimants to the brink of war (The Economist 2013). While the status of these land features and maritime border delimitations in East Asia remains unsettled, as detailed in East Asian Maritime Politics, the existence of a series of bilateral fishery agreements between the claimants governing most of their overlapping Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) serves as a reminder that these actors are capable of de-securitizing a salient issue (at least in part) by moving it back to the normal political arena. For instance, the conclusion of the April 2013 fishery agreement between Taipei and Tokyo covering waters near the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands has not only settled their disputes over access to catching grounds but also dampened what used to be a trigger for conservative groups in Taiwan to sail to the islands (Chen 2017). Although Tokyo’s decision was mainly intended to neutralize Taipei in the aftermath of its ‘nationalization’ of the Senkakus in September 2012—which provoked both the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan—the agreement was arguably the first step of a positive de-securitization process in Japan–Taiwan relations. It also shows that the ability to cooperate, not just (re)produce boundaries against external dangers, can be a source of legitimacy for East Asian states. This point could have been pursued in East Asian Maritime Politics, considering that the book intends to go beyond great-power perspectives and that the ROC is not internationally recognized (hence more deficient in legitimacy than any other East Asian state). In many ways, Taiwan deserves much greater coverage in the book, for it features prominently in the developmental state literature, possesses one of the largest fishing industries in the Pacific, and controls both the largest island group in the South China Sea (Tungsha/Paratas Islands) as well as the largest natural high-tide feature (Taiping/Itu Aba) in the Spratly Islands.

As far as the increasing enclosure of the ocean is concerned, Wirth rightly stresses that the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf set up by the United Nations Convention on
the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) only helps states to finalize their continental shelf limits for treaty negotiations and does not possess legal authority to determine maritime zones or settle disputes (p. 50); in other words, the commission’s recommendations in April 2012 that supported parts of Tokyo’s claims based on Okinotorishima did not henceforth endorse Japan’s right to exploit a much larger EEZ beyond the maximum 200 nautical miles. With the Permanent Court of Arbitration’s ruling in July 2016 that none of the high-tide features in the Spratly Islands is capable of sustaining human habitation or an economic life of their own as an island under UNCLOS, the book could have explored a region-wide de-securitization process beginning with the suspension or termination of the construction works on those islets/rocks/shoals in question. Such constructions do not make the sites legally any more valid as a basis for maritime demarcation but have been detrimental to the conservation of their surrounding ecosystems.

One might think it sufficient to focus on how and why the maritime sphere in East Asia has been securitized in the way that it has, for confronting the question of de-securitization head-on appears to be a separate, normative project. Yet this assumption rests on a false dichotomy between ‘what it is’ and ‘what it ought to be’, which in turn obstructs a more thorough investigation into the discursive construction of various binary oppositions by East Asian states on what ‘developed’, ‘strong’ and ‘high status’ mean (vis-à-vis ‘stagnant’, ‘weak’ and ‘tier two’) for their legitimacy and the consequences of such constructions. To be sure, East Asian Maritime Politics does acknowledge the existence of inconvenient people and groups whose voices have been marginalized or silenced so as not to ‘destabilize the fiction of the state’ (p. 197). Nevertheless, without introducing their counter-narratives to the state’s fiction, such acknowledgment alone does not destabilize, let alone dissolve, the aforementioned binaries. The omission of de-securitizing counter-narratives in this well-researched book means that the East Asian peoples (and the institutions that claim to represent them) are deprived of positive agency and must continue to live with their failure of normal politics, which is itself an orientalist fallacy that Wirth refuses to endorse (p. 199). This omission also works to naturalize the very humanity/nature dichotomy that separates human beings from the rest of nature, turning the ‘environment’ into something out there to be exploited by ‘us’. Rather than occupying ourselves with what has led to the absence of the ocean as ecological system from the discourse and practice of East Asian international relations, I am inclined to accept Marx’s exhortation: the point is to change it.

References