

COMMISSIONER TOBIN Opening Statement

April 4, 2013 Hearing: China's Maritime Disputes in the East and
South China Seas

COMMISSIONER TOBIN: Good morning, and welcome to the third hearing of the U.S.-China Commission's 2013 Annual Report cycle. Today's hearing covers China's maritime disputes in the East and South China Seas. We'll examine the security, political, legal, and economic drivers of these disputes in our three panels today. Though China's approach to the East China Sea and South China Sea differ, we consider them both today to better understand the overall challenge China faces in its maritime periphery.

This is not a new security issue. Nor is it the first time the Commission has focused its attention closely on the China Seas. For those of you interested, I suggest you look at the Commission's 2012 report which you will find on our Website. There is a section on the East China Sea and further on in Chapter 3 a thorough analysis of disputes in the South China Sea. If you've followed the news, you

know that in 2013 we've seen continued and escalated action, so we seek again to learn from experts, to ask further questions.

We'll begin by discussing the broad security situation on the high seas. As China's maritime forces have become more capable over the past decade, Beijing has become more confident in its ability to assert its claims in disputed areas. We look forward to hearing our witnesses' testimony today on China's security interests in the East and South China Seas, and how other actors throughout that region may shape Beijing's security calculus. Most importantly, our first panel will include a discussion on the implications of these disputes for the United States, as well as prospects for resolution.

Beyond China's "hard" security concerns, however, other domestic political and legal elements shape China's policy in the East and South China Seas. Our second panel considers popular nationalism as one of these elements. It has become a key driver of Chinese foreign policy as personality politics in Beijing has given way to a collective leadership seeking Party legitimacy. We look forward to a discussion on how nationalism helps or hinders China as it manages

its foreign and domestic policy on its near seas. We'll also explore in depth how China uses international legal language to further its "maritime rights and interests" in disputed waters. In light of the Philippines recent initiation of arbitration proceedings regarding China's nine dashed line, we'll be interested in a discussion on how the tangle of boundaries in the East and South China Seas can be resolved.

After our lunch break, we'll conclude with a panel on how resources and economic drivers shape China's maritime disputes. Security of China's near seas is critical to the unimpeded flow of trade and imported energy resources. Though the natural resources in the East and South China Seas undoubtedly shape the security landscape, there appears to be a debate on the centrality of oil and gas resources to the dispute. We've asked our witnesses to weigh in on this debate, and we look forward to hearing about how China aligns its foreign policy goals with its economic interests in disputed areas offshore.

Before we introduce our distinguished guests for the first panel, let me take a moment to thank Senator Tom Udall of New Mexico and his staff for securing this room for us today. I'd also like to remind our witnesses to keep remarks to 7 minutes so that we have time for our question-and-answer session.