



# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**THE SENKAKU/DIAOYU DISPUTE: AN IN-DEPTH  
LOOK AT CHINESE AND JAPANESE MOTIVATIONS**

by

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June 2021

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AND JAPANESE MOTIVATIONS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis was written to evaluate the relative importance of ethnic, economic, and military nationalism between China and Japan over a two-year period on the subject of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island dispute. From 2010 to 2012, this ongoing dispute generated a lot of open source media that delved into the issue, from published books to newspaper articles. What I found was the relative importance of economic over ethnic and military nationalism: the two countries fought to maintain economic stability above all else. This leads me to believe that despite these ongoing feuds, both countries realize that trade and maintaining other economic ties are far more important today than before.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this research study is to evaluate the relative importance of each brand of nationalism—ethnic, economic, and military—as each applies to the conflicts that arose around the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands between 2010 to 2012 in China and Japan. The framework of my research centers on how each country used these three different kinds of nationalism and which of these was most important.

My research and analysis focused entirely on published open-source documentation written in English. In addition to primary-source policy papers from government websites, I relied upon secondary sources including academic books, journals, newspapers, and economic data from reputable databases.

Based on my findings throughout open-source documents, there was a gradual increase in the amount of violence and backlash over the islands. There was an increased reliance on military usage; however, both countries did back down from each other's threats. China and Japan did what was necessary to maintain the status quo but did not intentionally escalate military tensions due to the need to maintain economic stability.

One common theme we see in this dispute is postponement—in other words, solving the problem later in favor of economic benefit. Postponement does come with a price; it does not resolve the issue at hand. But in this case, I found that economic nationalism was far more important than ethnic or military nationalism. The former was the enabler of the latter two. Both countries are not willing to go to outright, militant war over these islands at the risk of losing the economic advantages they enjoy with each other and the rest of the world.

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## **I. NATIONALISM LITERATURE REVIEW**

Nationalism in all its forms is a significant driver for most countries' decisions. For Japan and China, ethnic, economic, and military nationalism are the most important types of nationalism as it relates to the Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute. This is significant due to the historical memory of both countries and the economic resources at both countries' disposal, as well as the recent publicity and attention the vessels in the vicinity have received. To better understand the nuances of the previously mentioned drivers—under the umbrella of nationalism—the best thing to do is to have a broad understanding of the almost family-tree-like relationship of nationalism. Once that foundation is set, potential explanations and hypotheses make more sense.

### **A. MAJOR RESEARCH FOCUS**

The main goal of this thesis is to evaluate the relative importance of ethnic, economic, and military nationalism in Chinese and Japanese decisions regarding the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island dispute from 2010 to 2012. I evaluate both China's and Japan's government decisions about the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island dispute for the relative importance of three prominent types of nationalism: ethnic, economic, and military. The specific government decisions I evaluate include published policy, public knowledge, country-specific directives regarding military forces, and economic decisions made by China and Japan toward each other. This thesis looks at documents written in English or translated to English from Japanese or Chinese since 2010. The framework of my research centers on specific decisions each country made and how, if at all, each was an instance of one or more of those three nationalist tendencies.

### **B. RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE**

Historically, Japan and China have been at odds with each other and continual tensions will likely lead to dissimilar roles than in the past, as fortunes change. China continues to expand its reach via man-made islands in the East and South China Seas, while Japan slowly increases the size of its military. But both countries have an expansive economy to support further growth of their military. Both countries' relationships seem

uneven. Japan has a seemingly mutually beneficial relationship with the United States (military protection in exchange for economic benefit) which allowed Japan to divert money that normally would have been reserved for military development was injected into the economy. China's economy grew despite Japan's advantage. It has only just started slowing, but that has allowed it to grow in other ways such as through military growth, global influence, or investment.

As indicated by the large volume of scholarship, the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island dispute is still relevant to contemporary China and Japan. This thesis attempts to evaluate each country's decision through the lens of nationalism about a territorial dispute that has not been resolved. This question is still relevant to contemporary China and Japan because of the higher factor nationalism plays in each country. Although the two countries have a long history of contention, debate and difference of opinion about the islands, my focus will remain on the contemporary. There will be a section of this thesis that covers a brief history of both countries' actions regarding the islands.

Based on the large body of existing scholarship, these two countries' dispute is a prime example of conflict over territory. This conflict over territory brings to bear all three types of nationalism. This thesis attempts to parse out the relative importance of each type of nationalism as it relates to political decisions about the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Not only does this dispute between China and Japan encompass regional or identity boundaries, but also tests their military. This dispute tests their security in their own existence and future decisions, especially when the rest of the world is watching. This thesis will consider the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island dispute as another factor in the rising tensions between China and Japan.

This thesis does not aim to predict the future, but rather examine both countries' governmental decisions via a nationalist lens. This is significant because this same evaluative mechanism on a single dispute could be used on another dispute to determine which type of nationalism is more likely to play a formative role in future Chinese and Japanese relations.

This study will help us better understand the role of economic, military and ethnic nationalism concerns in Japan and China. If either country made a decision regarding the islands, then I would expect nationalist sentiment to precede that, which in turn would spur the government into action. Additionally, government action might increase or decrease economic nationalism if the material is sensitive enough to affect different ethnicities. What remains to be found is the frequency or pattern of life for each type of nationalism.

I expect to encounter elements from all three types of nationalism in my research findings because both countries, as discussed further in the literature review, have exhibited strong tendencies of each.

### **C. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Scholars have noted that many different factors shape nationalism, especially with respect to territorial conflict. One factor revolves around the idea of equality for all who are part of that nation, as the basis. This is most commonly known as liberal, or civic, nationalism and is usually found in democratic nations. Another factor revolves around the idea of ethnicity as the basis of creating a sense of nationalism. This is known as ethnic nationalism. Another factor revolves around the economy. Economic nationalism is easily indicative of the rise and fall of a nation's economy. In some nations, the economy is tied more tightly to the military, or the government, and therefore, having a strong economy is important to that nation. An additional factor revolves around the military. Military nationalism, or militarism, is recognizable among those nations that have and use a strong military to support or further the nation's agenda. As previously mentioned, military strength and economic strength can be interrelated. Yet another factor lies in the nation's propensity to have an anti-imperial sentiment. Anti-imperialism draws heavily on those countries that were previously ruled under large colonizing empires.

#### **1. Liberal Nationalism**

The origins of liberal nationalism lie in one of many reasons for the American and French Revolutions. People gathered around the ideas of life, liberty, the pursuit of

happiness, equality or fraternity and fought for their own sovereignty.<sup>1</sup> This school of thought also purports that man is neither slave to nor master of the institutions of his society, but part of a collective of people who chose what nationalism means to them. Their choices are not dictated by societal institutions. They can choose what societal structures exist and it gives that collective of people more reason to uphold their shared set of values.

Liberal nationalism in its infancy was not the same as liberal nationalism of the present day, especially on the topic of equality. The concept of equality has shifted over time in America, and other parts of the world. At first, the only eligible voters were Caucasian land-owning males. People of any color, and women were not allowed to vote. As times and ideas changed inside this liberal nationalist society, the list of eligible voters gradually grew to include all adults, regardless of gender, race, or social status. There were measures in place to prevent voting from becoming a free-for-all, but as long as an individual followed the standard registration process, that individual was allowed to vote. This is one example of liberal values equally applied to a country's population instead of a select ethnic group. This shows that liberal nationalism is more readily able to adapt to the ways and customs of the people in the community because it is not limited to specific ethnicity.

## **2. Ethnic Nationalism**

Other scholars argue that nationalism comes from ethnicity. Unlike liberal nationalism, ethnic nationalism is a more specific form of nationalism. There are two main schools of thought as to its germination. On one hand, it is formed by the adherence to and homogeneity of a specific race, or ethnicity. This is the most exclusive in nature, because ethnicity cannot be adopted. People cannot choose their ethnicity like they can choose their ideals. People may be able to change their hair color with dye, their eye color with colored contacts, and even their skin and features with plastic surgery, but they will not be able to change their ethnicity. One is born into it. One cannot just one day, decide to become Japanese, or Filipino or Spanish if they are German, or African, or Indian. Swapping one's

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<sup>1</sup> Stefan Auer, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Europe* (New York: Routledge 2004), 5.

ethnicity is not the same as swapping clothes or even intangible objects like beliefs. Ethnicity becomes a way in “which [it] links the members of ‘us’ because it emphasizes their differences from ‘them.’”<sup>2</sup> One either fits the criteria or one does not. It can become a segregating factor rather than a unifying one. But for the country that exhibits or promotes homogeneity, it can be a powerful unifying factor.

On the other hand, there is a group of scholars who argue that ethnicity must come after creating a state. After unification of a state, ethnicity is one of the elements used as a source of nationalism. One author calls it “fictive ethnicity” for it is the narrative and ethnic identity the state has determined for itself and the people within.<sup>3</sup> By drawing on history to support this claim, the term ethnicity seems far less foreign and less fictive. For example, how can one have Italians without first making Italy?<sup>4</sup> One example of a group that created its own history for an ethnicity were the Nazis. Although Nazi nationalism came from Adolf Hitler in Germany, it spread throughout Europe and its only requirements were strict Aryan guidelines. It did not matter that a person supported the Nazi cause; if that person did not meet specific delineated measurements, then that person was denied entry. But it also did not matter that one was born in Germany, or Poland, or Russia, if those guidelines were met.

Ethnic nationalism is very specific, it depends on historical narrative for strength. It was not hard for Japan to consolidate its people under one common ethnic identity. Even before the island nation opened to the rest of the world, it had already developed an ‘us versus them’ mentality. The close knit nature enabled them to develop “‘the spirit of Japan...’ [that] the people...spirit and tradition [were] everything....[It was] a concept as old as historic Japan.”<sup>5</sup> This spirit has been characterized as a flock or hive mentality, all persons working toward a common goal and until that goal is achieved, all focus on the

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<sup>2</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, “Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today,” in *Mapping the Nation*, ed. Gopal Balakrishnan (London: Verso), 258, Kindle.

<sup>3</sup> Etienne Balibar, “The Nation Form: History and Ideology,” in *Becoming National*, eds. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 140–141.

<sup>4</sup> Hobsbawm, “Ethnicity and Nationalism,” 257.

<sup>5</sup> Edwin P. Hoyt, *The Militarists: The Rise of Japanese Militarism Since WWII* (New York: Donald I. Fine, 1985), 112.

end prize. “Once determined on a national course, the Japanese follow it...with enormous energy.”<sup>6</sup>

In each of the two schools of thought, ethnic nationalism is very different than liberal nationalism. One section of ethnic nationalism depends on historical narrative for its strength. This is akin to the scholars that agree that nation-building is based solely on a nation’s past. Whereas liberal nationalism is open to anyone who subscribes to liberal political values, ethnic nationalism is limited to only people within a specific ethnic background. This is opposite liberal nationalism where nationalism is derived from a state of consciousness and specifically chosen. As briefly mentioned earlier in this section, unlike liberal nationalism, ethnic nationalism is highly exclusive. One can either claim that ethnicity or one cannot. One may be able to claim more than one ethnicity, but for those that are purists, those of mixed heritage may be excluded from the national group. As scholars have shown, ethno-nationalists often clash with other ethnic groups, since they perceive there to be hard differences between themselves and other countries.<sup>7</sup>

### **3. Economic Nationalism**

Economic nationalism stems from scholars who agree that a nation was able to exist because of a strong economy. The economic processes of capitalism, such as open markets and supply and demand enabled countries to increase their economic power which also translated to the strength of their government. Markets became a meeting place for people, where they can exchange goods but also ideas, concepts, argue platforms, question decisions. Other scholars argue that nationalism arose out of economic development. Scholars of this variety claim that governments fostered nationalism in order to rally people around a shared commitment to economic growth. Typically, this process involved governments trying to have people shift their focus away from individual or familial concerns toward national development. Other scholars have highlighted how governments stress national loyalty over global ideologies such as religion or socialism, which could potentially undermine a citizen’s dedication to a specific state.

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<sup>6</sup> Hoyt, *The Militarists*, 113.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 6.

Other scholars link the rise of nationalism to what Benedict Anderson has called “print-capitalism.”<sup>8</sup> As people met and gathered in markets to exchange goods, books and pamphlets also circulated. From that circulation, ideas spread, and controversy and change met a wider audience. People were able to express their thoughts in written form in the same language. The creation of these shared language communities made people aware that their individual concerns were part of a much broader group of people who all spoke the same language and who were all involved of pressuring governments to respond to their political concerns. With the rise “print-capitalism,” came a rise in the emphasis for education.<sup>9</sup> This also strengthened nationalist movements because education became a way to inoculate the young with a certain set of ideals, which bred loyalty to a specific state. Adults also benefitted from education because they were then able to read and understand what was printed. Additionally, a nation focused on economic nationalism usually put into place policies that offered protection for domestic products and were directed toward supporting the country’s economy. If the government did not protect the people’s interests, then the people might rise in revolution due to monetary inequalities or class differences.

#### **4. Military Nationalism**

Military nationalism, or militarism as it is sometimes defined, is the notion that the military is the nationalist center of attention. The nation is centered on the existence of the military to maintain its own interests. As some authors argue, a nation’s military is formed by the citizens, for the citizens to protect their own interests internally and abroad.<sup>10</sup> Another reason that the military becomes a major part of nationalism is because of local pushback “against colonialism and foreign occupation.”<sup>11</sup> Sometimes the image of a threat may seem greater than in actuality, when one entity or another takes and appropriates the military to their own ends. For example, some scholars argue that the United States took

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<sup>8</sup> John Breuilly, “Approaches to Nationalism,” in *Mapping the Nation*, ed. Gopal Balakrishnan (London: Verso), 159, Kindle.

<sup>9</sup> Breuilly, 159.

<sup>10</sup> For more on nationalism, see *Becoming National: A Reader*, edited by Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, and *Mapping the Nation*, edited by Gopal Balakrishnan.

<sup>11</sup> Gopal Balakrishnan, “The National Imagination” in *Mapping the Nation*, ed. Gopal Balakrishnan (London: Verso), 210, Kindle.

on militarist characteristics during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when it used the Monroe Doctrine as justification to create the borders it has today. In the early stages of its formation, the United States used its military strength to overthrow British rule, obtain land from the Spanish, buy land from the French, and evict the Native Americans who had previously settled the land. Some would argue that the United States engaged in abusive militarism. Others would say it is just nationalism or nationalist pride. The relationship between these two aspects—militarism and nationalism—was directly proportional and can increase or decrease in equal measure.

Within the boundaries of nationalism, most scholars consider militarism as the expression of a country's nationalism through a powerful military. Given that militarism is one type of nationalism, both China and Japan have a large historical background of both types. As was the case with the newly minted United States, each country's nationalism has also supported the militaristic aspect and vice versa; successful military ventures promoted nationalism. I will first illustrate Japanese and Chinese militarism then describe a brief overview of the history behind the Senkaku Islands and apply the developed parameters.

## **5. Anti-imperial Nationalism**

Another form of nationalism is anti-imperial nationalism, or anti-imperialism. It is the opposite sentiment of imperialism, which implies a single nation's rule and acquisition of territories.<sup>12</sup> Nations that were previously under colonial rule tend to have a higher regard for their sovereignty than those who were not previously under colonial rule. It is a choice that is developed based on their circumstances. Scholars with this mindset believe that the people within have a choice to let their nationalism be decided based on the events that have occurred or decide it for themselves. One of the limiting factors of another scholar's argument that a newly freed nation had their predecessor's example to follow to organize their government.<sup>13</sup> That was not always the case. For example, Great Britain,

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<sup>12</sup> Stephen Howe, *Empire: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 13.

<sup>13</sup> Partha Chatterjee, "Whose Imagined Community?" in *Mapping the Nation*, ed. Gopal Balakrishnan (London: Verso), 183, Kindle.



France, Spain, and the Dutch carved their own individual empires within Southeast Asia. After the four empires vacated the region, Southeast Asian countries' national identity was developed in stark contrast to their colonial predecessors.

However, that power vacuum meant Southeast Asian countries were left to their own devices to develop as a nation. Some of the problems that being left to their own devices caused was a lack of knowledge about how to make processes work or be more successful. Those countries knew enough to not want another form of imperialistic rule. Anti-imperial nationalism can have elements of both ethnic and liberal nationalism. Anti-imperial nationalists often build a strong ethnic component into their narratives of local identity. But depending on the severity, the colonizers may have not left much of a culture behind for those people to rebuild upon, and so anti-imperial nationalists often invent new traditions. Anti-imperial nationalism also does not necessarily tend toward democracy after the colonizers have left. It can just easily tend toward nationalist groups forming authoritarian institutions to hold together their weakly united country.

## **6. Japanese Nationalism**

Japanese nationalism stems from several sources. First, there is the post-World War II memory and the Yoshida Doctrine, which is largely due to the U.S.-Japan alliance. They are divided by those who are for the alliance, and those who are not. This in turn also affects their views on the military forefront. Those who agree with the Yoshida doctrine and what it represents are okay with a smaller military. Those who are against it are not okay with a small military. Second, the Japanese constitution, specifically Article 9 and their use of force splits the country in two. How much force is too much force? What amount of use of the military is deemed unconstitutional? Third, there is the fading memory of World War II which affects how the political decisions made in the post war era are upheld or changed. The changing demographics influences this fading memory. As their population gets older and people who were not directly affected by the war step into positions of authority in politics and business.

In Japan, militarism was promoted through a unified sense of nationalist spirit. Concerning “‘the spirit of Japan...’ the Japanese militarists had convinced themselves, and

then the people, that spirit and tradition [were] everything and physical power and capacity [were] as nothing compared to it--a concept as old as historic Japan.”<sup>14</sup> This spirit has been characterized as a flock or hive mentality: all persons working toward a common goal and until that goal is achieved, all focus on the end prize. “Once determined on a national course, the Japanese follow it...with enormous energy.”<sup>15</sup> This mentality was clearly demonstrated in Japan’s pre-World War II military buildup. Another indication of pre-war military power is the use of the phrase *ware-ware*. Loosely translated, it means “we” in Japanese, but going deeper into a translation uncovers a more militaristic nuance. What is not typically translated is that *ware-ware* means: “We Japanese, the most favored and superior people of the world.”<sup>16</sup> Similar to the way the Japanese characters for Greater East Asia War were banned after 1945, this phrase saw less use distinctly because of its association with military might.<sup>17</sup>

This is where we see the split between liberals and conservatives: those for the military limitation and those against it. On one extreme, the pacifists believe that Japan should not have a military and remain peaceful. On the other extreme, there are those who advocate for Japan’s normalization; that is, develop and become more like most other countries with its own military to defend its interests. There are also several people whose beliefs lie anywhere in between.

The economy is also important in Japan because businesses and government worked hand in hand to improve the economy. One explanation offered is that economic success replaced military nationalism post-World War II. Japan took advantage of its international position to increase manufacturing and put itself through another industrial revolution while still remaining relatively protectionist and isolated to improve its own

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<sup>14</sup> Hoyt, *The Militarists*, 112.

<sup>15</sup> Hoyt, 113.

<sup>16</sup> Hoyt, 210.

<sup>17</sup> Peter Duus, ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan Volume 6: The Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 381.

companies.<sup>18</sup> This worked in their favor because even though some scholars argue that the economy was attained at social cost, it was still relatively stable and strong, and it has fostered strong national pride in Japanese economic success.

Japan is made up of a collection of several different ethnic groups to include the Ainu and Okinawan (or Ryukyuan). However, the consensus among the Japanese population is that minorities are inferior to those who are “true” Japanese. This distinction leads to some internal unrest and differing of opinion, especially in the government.

## **7. Chinese Nationalism**

Many scholars have noted that China’s history of imperial humiliation plays a large role in Chinese nationalism. Yet, one author notes, “[w]e must be sensitive to the difference between history and historical memory.”<sup>19</sup> There is a difference between history and the way individuals or groups of people remember the same events. This includes all the emotional connotations and fading of memory as the generation that went through the experience grows older and does not necessarily pass down the true or whole knowledge, if at all, of what happened. As a result, the next generation gets a softer or hazier version of events.

China is now drawing on its history to create a sense of national pride in a long history of grandeur and success as another form of nation building. The difference between history and historical memory might have strengthened their resolve. The example that comes to mind is how China’s Communist Party (CCP) is pulling elements of history, Sun Tzu and Confucius, to legitimize their rule and use it to instill a sense of nationalism in their population. When the CCP has the entire population’s full support, it can continue to further its agenda.

China also had strong, economic, and nationalist attitude. Over the last few decades, the CCP has not only shepherded China through rapid economic development, it has also

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<sup>18</sup> Chalmers Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982), 277.

<sup>19</sup> Zheng Wang, *Never Forget: National Humiliation Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Affairs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 15.

guided the country through two financial crises.<sup>20</sup> China's economic growth has also enabled them invest more in their military, which in turn has fueled further patriotic pride in the nation. In the news, China has broadcast several parades and ceremonies to unveil new equipment or celebrate a historical victory. This says a lot about wanting to foster pride in its people. This also sends a message to world that China is increasing its ability to project its forces in better ways.

Concerning Chinese ethno-nationalism, several readings indicate that both government action and inaction has spurred protests regarding the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island dispute.<sup>21</sup> Some readings have not indicated whether anti-imperialist sentiment also spurred the action, but this can be inferred because the islands are contested territory.

China also has its own powerful values, like Japan. This country held sway in the Pacific region for several thousands of years before the spread of the British Empire. The concept of *zhongguo*, translated "choseness," is one example found in the Chinese language.<sup>22</sup> Another translation for China, *lǐhénzhou* means "sacred" or "divine land"; a third translation, *tiāncháo*, means "celestial empire or heavenly dynasty."<sup>23</sup> The translations indicate a level of divine right that has been embedded in their culture for generations. China relied on the power of its military, and government to maintain a large area, in addition to its tributary countries. Its current rise can be described as decidedly militaristic. Using history as an analogy, "[B]ecause Germany's economy was growing rapidly so could its fleet."<sup>24</sup> This describes an interlinkage between the economy and the military, and because China's economy has grown, so too has its' fleet.

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<sup>20</sup> Yasheng Huang, *Capitalism with Chinese Characteristics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>21</sup> Jessica Chen Weiss, *Powerful Patriots: Nationalist Protest in China's Foreign Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>22</sup> Wang, *Never Forget*, 42.

<sup>23</sup> Wang, 42.

<sup>24</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, *The Rise of China vs. The Logic of Strategy* (Cambridge, MA.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), 59.

## 8. Island Dispute

The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands<sup>25</sup> are simply a chain of “five uninhabited islets and three rocks”<sup>26</sup> or, features, located “about 120 nautical miles northeast of Taiwan, 200 nautical miles east of mainland China, and about 200 nautical miles southwest of the city of Naha, Okinawa.”<sup>27</sup> The islets, comprised of a total of 6.786 square kilometers, or 2.62 square miles, are coveted for their economic value in fishing,<sup>28</sup> and “possible hydrocarbon deposits lodged in the seabed.”<sup>29</sup> China and Japan have contested over several pieces of land, but for this particular group of islands the fight can be traced back as early as the 12th century. The dispute is a visible manifestation of ethnic, economic, and military nationalism from China and Japan.

Very little evidence existed prior to the 19th century regarding the islands. Based on strong indications, both China and Japan had weak claims to the islands. Though interest piqued after Japan’s takeover in 1895, the islands were not the focus of either country.

The two countries have contested over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands as early as the twelfth century. In 1372, the contested islets were used “as navigational reference points by Chinese imperial envoys traveling to the Ryukyu Kingdom.”<sup>30</sup> The kingdom of Okinawa still paid tithings to China and its convoys used the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands as navigational aids. In addition, some of the islands supported “a military post of Chinese

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<sup>25</sup> Diaoyu Dao is the Chinese name for the islands and Senkaku Gunto is the Japanese name for the same set of features in the ocean. This paper attempts to remain neutral; the naming distinction of the islands is not the focus. Scholars writing from a Japanese perspective write about the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island Dispute and, conversely, those writing from a Chinese perspective use the name Diaoyu/Senkaku. For the sake of consistency this paper refers to the islands by name using Senkaku or Senkaku/Diaoyu, but without implying any sort of bias regarding the debate. Additionally, much of the literature on the dispute involves the Republic of China, also known as Taiwan, but the focus will remain on the behaviors of the People’s Republic of China in Beijing and Japan.

<sup>26</sup> Hungdah Chiu, “An Analysis of the Sino-Japanese Dispute Over the T’iaoyutai Islets (Senkaku Gunto),” *Occasional Papers/Reprint Series in Contemporary Asian Studies* 1, no. 150 (1999): 2.

<sup>27</sup> Han-Yi Shaw, “The Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands Dispute: Its History and an Analysis of the Ownership Claims of the P.R.C., R.O.C., and Japan,” *Occasional Papers/Reprint Series in Contemporary Asian Studies* 3, no. 152 (1999): 10.

<sup>28</sup> Shaw, “The Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands Dispute,” 11.

<sup>29</sup> Chiu, “An Analysis of the Sino-Japanese Dispute,” 3.

<sup>30</sup> Shaw, “The Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands Dispute,” 11.

naval forces, and an operational base by fishermen from Taiwan.”<sup>31</sup> According to Chinese records, the Japanese had no recorded involvement with the islands until the late 1800s.

By the late 1800s, after Japan had won the Sino-Japanese war, the Japanese took over the islands, collected extensive evidence via several on-site surveys that the islands were uninhabited, and therefore were subject to new jurisdiction. In addition, the government of Japan took action to include these islands in Okinawa Prefecture. Meanwhile, the islands had come under private lease to an Okinawan citizen, who built upon the island and kept the contract within the Koga family. By 1932, Zenji Koga was the official owner of the Senkaku Islands. World War II was another turning point for the islands. With Japan’s surrender and the Treaty of San Francisco, the United States took administrative control of the Ryukyu Island chain to include the Senkaku Islands. At the end of the United States’ jurisdiction in 1971, it handed the islands over to Japan.

If China narrated the same timeline, one would hear that the islands were, and still are, strictly Chinese territory. When Japan conquered the islands after winning the Sino-Japanese war, China perceived them as having been stolen. When the United States handed them back to Japan, China bristled at the obvious favoritism. And so, tensions continued to grow. A series of protests and activist movements stemmed from both countries over the subsequent forty years.

In 2008, two Chinese Marine Surveillance ships entered the territorial waters. Though not determined as military vessels, this event foreshadowed the rising numbers of Chinese vessels that established a new normal in the territorial waters of the islands. The waters are calm between January 2009 and September 2010. This brings the timeline up to the year the Japanese Coast Guard vessel and Chinese fishing vessel collided.

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<sup>31</sup> Shaw, “The Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands Dispute,” 11.

#### **D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATION AND HYPOTHESES**

- (1) Hypothesis 1: Ethnic nationalism is relatively more important than economic or military nationalism in China and Japan.

Ethnic nationalism is much more easily identifiable than the other two types, but it does not mean that it is relatively more important. It manifests itself in language, food, style, even political decisions. However, it can explain motive behind several cultural occurrences in both countries. In China, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is using age-old wisdom from Confucius to reestablish their political legitimacy as a party. In Japan, the word *gaijin* refers to anyone who is foreign. *Nihonjin* refers to those who are native Japanese. To the very conservative, even the Okinawans and Ainu were not considered Japanese though they live in the country. No matter how fluent one is in Japanese, unless one was born on the mainland, one is still *gaijin*.

The largest body of support for this hypothesis would lie in the political parties in power and the decisions they made over the islands. The evidence would be the people in power who make decisions and what beliefs and convictions drive their decisions. It is very difficult to discern internal feelings and perceptions. As such, I would only look at published political decisions that came to pass instead of trying to analyze what people were thinking. I would look at news articles translated into English during that time period.

This hypothesis seems most likely to be correct if the results are based on the large amount of scholarship that already exists. However, this hypothesis is limited in nature because it discounts the possibility that more than one type of nationalism has affected Chinese and Japanese political decisions on the island dispute. It also discounts the concept of globalization; countries are less isolated than they were two hundred years ago. Globalization also brings with it cross-ethnic marriages and mixed ethnicity offspring.

- (2) Hypothesis 2: Economic nationalism is relatively more important than ethnic or military nationalism in China and Japan.

Evidence to support this could be found in growing exports, bi- and multilateral trade agreements, foreign aid, collateral loans, increased monetary and military power, as

well as editorials or translated newspaper articles. Influence in and among other countries in the East and Southeast Asia region is a strong indicator of increased economic power.

Japan's perception of its economic role in East Asia stems from economic power. Japan is concerned for its continued economic security as China wields its growing economy, and equally growing military. China is less concerned with Japan and more concerned with its place in the rest of the world. This is evident in its investment in bilateral agreements in the region as well as less developed countries such as Africa and parts of Latin America, and their expansion into the South China Sea. This is also evident in President Xi Jinping's acceptance of China's single digit gross domestic product (GDP) growth, also known as the "New Normal." Up until recently, GDP growth has maintained the party's legitimacy. Now that China has entered a "New Normal" phase, the Party may have to use another platform besides economic growth to maintain legitimacy. But because it has transformed economic downturn into a new platform of legitimacy suggests otherwise.

The information I would expect to find to support this hypothesis is policy that is very economically oriented. The islands generate their own attention which then feeds Japan and China's individual markets from protestors traveling to the island to fishermen on boats traveling there as well. Additionally, both countries have sent their military over to support. Another piece of evidence that would support is increased investment in research and development projects. Research and development is another way of saying ingenuity; both countries need ingenuity because the current market is starting to develop diminishing returns.

- (3) Hypothesis 3: Military nationalism, or militarism, is relatively more important than ethnic and economic nationalism in China and Japan.

This hypothesis has a partial foothold on the possibility of being correct. Militarism can be dual-hatted. At the same time, it can either support or be supported by economic or ethnic nationalism. But the strongest argument for its existence in both countries is their current move toward a larger military. In China's case, that is becoming a physical reality. In Japan's case, that is mostly fought in parliament and in the Diet policy argument. The



military was also strongly present in both countries' histories. China saw itself for a long time as the ruler of the middle kingdom, with Japan and Korea as its tributaries. Japan developed a large military for the colonization of East and Southeast Asia.

The type of evidence that I expect to find to support this hypothesis would be found in each country's white papers, as well as any type of military parade, press conference, or other publicity stunt to further promote the military. Though this is not specifically related to the islands, the timing and release of the white papers, especially those that announce military growth, are key. As a foil to hypothesis 2, China or Japan's use of their economy to support military growth would be another type of evidence to support this claim.

- (4) Hypothesis 4: It is a combination of all three that are relatively important because ethnic nationalism feeds economic growth, which in turn helps increase military strength. Conversely, military can help or undermine economic growth, which is closely linked to ethnic nationalism.

This hypothesis seems most likely, because each strand of nationalism holds a tenuous interdependent relationship with the others. Given that a singular nationalism strain may not be of sole importance, the argument for a combination of all three strains of nationalism makes the most sense. Historical narrative and historical memory is also included in this hypothesis. This is seen in the way the central government pulls from the past to provide political legitimacy. By emphasizing the historical philosophers, the Party likens China back to a time when it was the center of its universe. Both countries have memories of previous strength. Japan still has a long memory as seen by the number of memorials and monuments to the past. They have a stronghold on the past that also gets passed down from generation to generation. China has memories of its greatness prior to its own Century of Humiliation.

Increased economic strength can lead to stronger pride in one's nation and more resources to provide for a stronger military. As mentioned in the second hypothesis, economic nationalism is a strong factor in boosting pride in a national military. If a country has more money, it is easier for them to invest in research and development, or its defense budget, as in China's case. Japan on the other hand, is restricted under the Yoshida Doctrine. The Yoshida Doctrine was written by the United States as Japan's constitution

after World War II. It prevented Japan's use of a military; to this day, Japan has a self-defense force, not a military. Article 9 of the constitution prevents Japan from using war as means of conflict resolution. Since Japan's defeat in World War II, it has had to rely on other measures besides the military to establish itself in the region.

The strength of this hypothesis would come from comparing and drawing connections from all three strands of nationalism from each country from 2010 to present day. That means paying attention to recurring themes, and reasons or motivations for making such political decisions (as much as can be gleaned from academic scholarship and primary documents).

#### **E. RESEARCH DESIGN**

My research examines open-source documents from each country as well as academic scholarship. I study the political decisions of China and Japan regarding the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute to assess the relative importance of three strands of nationalism: ethnic, economic, and military. I evaluate the relative importance of each countries' public actions starting with the Japanese Coast Guard and Chinese trawler collision in 2010, and Japan's purchase of the islands in 2012. This attempts to establish a baseline for how each country's governmental policy behaves regarding a major territorial dispute. In this way, it sets a framework for analyzing future interactions between these two countries and a precedent on any future interactions. I am relying on sources written in English. The primary sources are policy papers from government websites. The secondary sources are academic books, journals, newspapers, and economic data from reputable databases. These sources provide context in order to evaluate my hypotheses.

## **II. 2010 INCIDENT: COLLISION BETWEEN A JAPANESE COAST GUARD VESSEL AND CHINESE TRAWLER**

This chapter looks at the incident that occurred on September 7, 2010, a collision between the Japanese Coast Guard vessel and Chinese trawler, and the subsequent actions that further exacerbated and brought to the forefront the dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. This chapter examines the naval actions between the two countries and the economic connection between the two countries. While it seems like this incident should have sparked more violent relations between the two countries, the countries' desire to maintain economic stability took precedence. Economic stability in the region is important because these countries are neighbors who are dependent on each other and the resources of the region.

### **A. HISTORICAL RECAP**

Before we delve into the incident itself, here is a quick overview of the militaristic nationalism of the island dispute. It is important to note that before World War II, military nationalism between both countries concerning the islands varied in strength and use depending on the time period. When China lost its grip on the Asian region to the British, Japan took advantage of that weakness and filled it. In the early period of the Meiji Restoration, Japan's military successes in the first Sino-Japanese War and Russo-Japanese War carried them through to the Second Sino-Japanese War. It was in this first Sino-Japanese War that Japan took possession of the Senkaku Island chain.<sup>32</sup> These two wars are the first two instances of Japanese militarism toward the Chinese regarding the islands.

In the aftermath of World War II, the U.S. took center stage as a world power. Military nationalism diminished considerably in both countries. The islands were never a target during the Cold War, but ownership remained contested. There were several treaties and negotiations that took place with United States involvement, but ultimately returned control back to Japan. Neither China nor Japan was able to support or contest the turnover.

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<sup>32</sup> Chiu, "An Analysis of the Sino-Japanese Dispute," 17–18.

China had not developed the equipment or economy it has today, and Japan was constrained under the Yoshida Doctrine.<sup>33</sup> Though there were a series of protests over the years, military action did not occur until 2010.

## **B. DURING THE 2010 INCIDENT**

The year 2010 marked a significant increase in activity between both countries over the islands. On September 7, 2010, a Chinese fishing vessel collided into a Japanese Coast Guard patrol boat. The damage was minimal, but China maintained it was an accident whereas Japan thought it was deliberate. The incident was further exacerbated in Japan when one Japanese officer posted the video of the collision online. When Japan detained and charged the captain and his crew for “obstructing officers in their line of duty,” incited further anger in China.<sup>34</sup> Though the crew was released six days later, the captain was held for an additional seventeen days after the incident.<sup>35</sup> Relations between the two countries deteriorated, and the long captivity caused a severe decrease in their relations. Because Beijing considered this an affront to the relative peace the two countries reached over the island dispute, the quality of bilateral talks decreased sharply, economic joint ventures were broken off, and other interactions involving Japan halted.

Both countries experienced escalating tension, though neither wanted to risk further violence. In this matter, China remained neutral to Japan’s use of force. However, when the anniversary of the Japanese invasion and takeover of Manchuria in 1931 (an ideal example of Japanese militarism at its most potent) came and went, and the captain was still detained, the Chinese public reacted. But in order to keep the protests from taking on an inward spin, the focus remained on the islands. Even then-Premier, Wen Jiabao, claimed that the islands were “sacred territory.”<sup>36</sup> But he did not explicitly direct the military to defend and retake the islands. Though the number of vessels entering within territorial

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<sup>33</sup> The Yoshida Doctrine became Japan’s constitution after World War II. Article 9 of this doctrine stated that the country was no longer allowed to maintain a military force, rather, they created what is now known as their Self Defence Forces.

<sup>34</sup> John Garver, *China’s Quest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 724.

<sup>35</sup> Garver, 724.

<sup>36</sup> Weiss, *Powerful Patriots*, 175.

waters challenging Japanese claim to the islands increased sharply, it does not differentiate between civilian craft, Chinese Maritime Militia, or Chinese naval vessels. Japan's count of China's intrusions may have been a factor in the island dispute but maintaining domestic stability and economic growth seemed to be a larger factor.

Based on the historical trend, Japan displayed more militarism than China, with a two to one ratio. During the 2010 incident, Japan was decidedly militaristic compared to China. Whether it was accidental or not, these events occurred.<sup>37</sup> The Chinese vessel collided with the Japanese Coast Guard vessel that led to a series of militarist actions on both sides as discussed in the next section. The next section will look the actions of both parties after the 2010 incident.

### **C. AFTER THE INCIDENT**

The below information is discussed in this section since it deals with the same subject matter as the chapter: the military actions of both countries in and around the Senkaku/Daioyu Islands. Japan's political action of purchasing the islands does bear some consideration. It is discussed here in detail, though briefly mentioned in the following chapter. As depicted in Figure 1, Chinese vessels demonstrated increased activity in 2012, likely in response to Tokyo's official purchase of the islands from Koga on September 11. The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) noted that intrusions occurred approximately three times a month by Chinese government vessels, though some months experienced up to seven or eight instances.<sup>38</sup> A RAND study showed Chinese Coast Guard vessels intruded 68 times in the remainder of 2012.<sup>39</sup> In 2013, that number jumped to 188.

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<sup>37</sup> Though nothing official was published, there are rumors and conjectures that the Chinese trawler captain was one, under the influence, and two, possibly a member of the Chinese Maritime Militia, which would make his actions military. All of this is speculation based on what one can hear from the unofficial video posted online and went viral shortly after the collision.

<sup>38</sup> "Chinese Vessels Entering Senkaku Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, accessed March 20, 2018, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000180283.pdf>.

<sup>39</sup> Lyle J. Morris, "The New 'Normal' in the East China Sea," RAND Corporation, accessed March 20, 2018, <https://www.rand.org/blog/2017/02/the-new-normal-in-the-east-china-sea.html>.

At least three of those intrusions were Chinese PLA vessels, not just coast guard.<sup>40</sup> There were comparable numbers in 2014 and 2015, at 88 and 86, respectively. But in December 2015 there was inconsistency in Chinese behavior; MOFA observed visible cannons on select Chinese ships. This anomaly was partially the result of previous incursions where unarmed Chinese vessels were escorted by armed Japanese ships.<sup>41</sup>

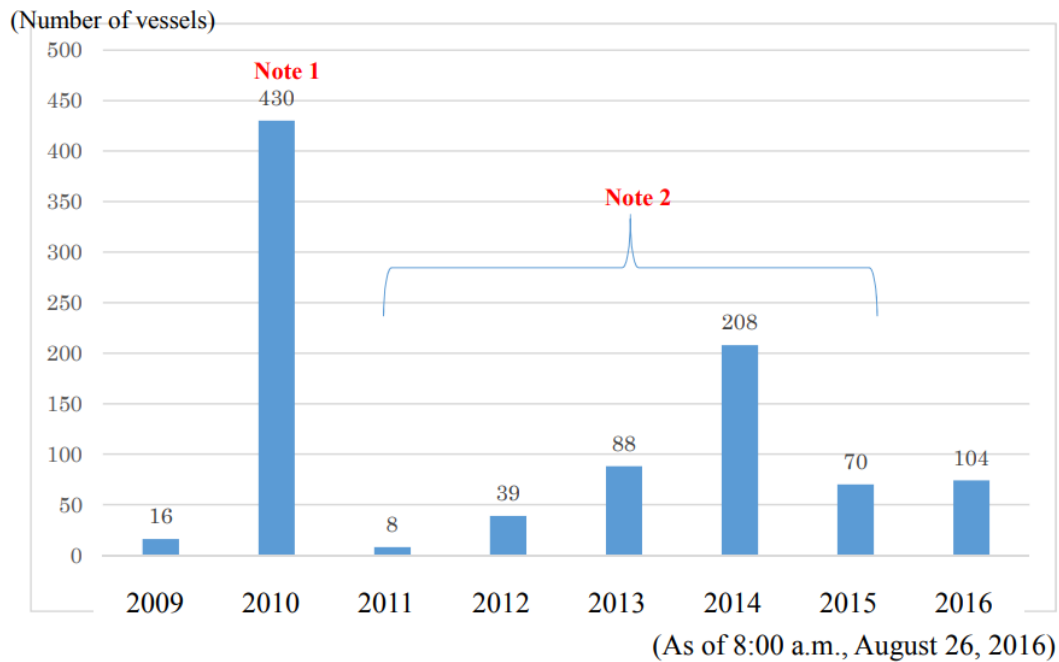


Figure 1. Chinese Fishing Vessels Operating in Vicinity of Senkaku Islands<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> The Chinese Maritime Militia are civilian owned and operated ships that give an inconsistent and irregular portion of their time to carry out military orders. But since there is ambiguity, it is hard to determine intent and whether they were “just fishing” or actually conducting a military operation at the higher direction of the PLA (N).

<sup>41</sup> Morris, “The New ‘Normal’ in the East China Sea.”

<sup>42</sup> Source: *Status of Activities by Chinese Government Vessels and Chinese Fishing Vessels in Waters surrounding the Senkaku Islands* (Tokyo, Japan: Ministry of Foreign Affairs), <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000180283.pdf>.

Routine measures by both countries continued in very much the same manner through 2016, until August 5–9 when a flotilla of 300 Chinese fishing vessels was escorted by 15 Chinese naval vessels. This anomaly is an important spike and show in Chinese militarism. In 2017, the trend continued, but instead of two Chinese vessels, the typical number became four vessels.<sup>43</sup> On January 8, 2018, four Chinese Coast Guard vessels made an unsurprising visit as China again established a new normal for the New Year.<sup>44</sup> Though four vessels quickly became a trend for the rest of 2017 and into 2018, it is important to note the change can be considered another sign of increased militarism. The sheer volume of traffic, as well as Chinese Coast Guard visibility is a subtle but definite signal to increased militarism.

On Japan's side, their coast guard was deployed often enough to issue warnings to both fishing vessels and government vessels alike, as many as 25 times a day in some cases. The chart above depicts aggregated data of the number of vessels that were issued warnings each year. The bracket for Note 2 indicates that the number of vessels decreased from the year 2014 to 2015 because of a "strengthening of responses" from the Japanese Coast Guard in the area.<sup>45</sup> From that data, Japan has been expending time, money, and effort to patrol the waters with clearly marked coast guard vessels. As a result, this is also a clear indication of their increased sense of militarism.

However, there are two notable incidents that represent an increase in militarism after the 2010 collision. The first is the Chinese flotilla with her escorts. The second is the change from a quantity of Chinese vessels that patrol the waters. It changed from two ships to four ships in the subsequent recent years. Despite the perceived imbalance in military action and response, both countries' governments understand that fomenting a war between the two countries over the islands is not the best path. Both countries understand the

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<sup>43</sup> Katie Hunt, "How an Uninhabited Island Chain Splits Japan and China," CNN, February 6, 2017, ProQuest; Yoko Wakatsuki and Junko Ogura, "Japan: China's 'Escalating' Tensions over Disputed Islands," CNN, May 19, 2017, ProQuest; Jiji Kyodo, "Two Chinese Coast Guard Vessels Intrude into Japanese Waters off Aomori Prefecture," *The Japan Times*, July 17, 2017, ProQuest; Ankit Panda, "4 China Coast Guard Vessels Enter Japan-Administered Waters Near Disputed East China Sea Islands," *The Diplomat*, January 4, 2018, ProQuest.

<sup>44</sup> Panda, "4 China Coast Guard Vessels."

<sup>45</sup> Panda.

importance of maintaining economic stability despite the military activity, which is why both have been careful not to push the envelope.

#### **D. ECONOMIC CONNECTION**

The economic connection between China and Japan was one of the more significant factors that prevented a rise in tensions between the two countries in the East China Sea. Since the end of World War II, Japan was giving China economic assistance labeled as a program instead of as aid.<sup>46, 47</sup> That all changed when China took over as the second-largest economy in 2010. “In the 40 years over which the aid programme lasted, Japan provided China 4.65 trillion yen to support infrastructure and humanitarian projects and environmental protection.”<sup>48</sup> This amount of money was not well advertised even though it was not supposed to be called aid. “China hasn’t been telling much about the Japanese aid to its people, but it was considered to have had a positive impact over the years,” said Yu Tiejun of the Institute of International and Strategic Studies at Peking University.”<sup>49</sup>

The Japanese assistance program positively impacted China’s ability to develop. Despite this incident between the two ships in September, the two countries did not want to upset the modicum of peace that had been reached via trade over the last forty years. “In 2010, China was the primary trade partner for South Korea and Japan, and Japan was the second largest trade partner for China and South Korea.”<sup>50</sup> According to World’s Top Exports website, Japan slipped to third place in 2018, but trade was still valued at 6% or

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<sup>46</sup> Shaid Javed Burki, “In Japan, China finds a new friend,” *The Express Tribune*, November 5, 2018, ProQuest.

<sup>47</sup> Burki also notes that any type of foreign aid was seen as negative due to the “...political sensitivity about formal war apologies...” and the concept that aid was given to developing countries exclusively. China did not want to have that connotation associated between them and Japan.

<sup>48</sup> Burki.

<sup>49</sup> Burki.

<sup>50</sup> Hidetaka Yoshimatsu, “Economic-Security Linkages in Asia,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the International Relations of Asia*, ed. Saadia Pekkanen, John Ravenhill, and Rosemary Foot, (Oxford: Oxford Handbooks Online, October 2014), 8.



\$137.4 billion.<sup>51</sup> China was first on the top five list of countries Japan had the highest amounts of imports and exports, according to World Integrated Trade Solutions, a World Bank group.<sup>52</sup> According to an article on the Japan International Freighters Forwarders Association Inc., the first half of 2010 set a new record with a 34.5% to US\$138.4 billion.<sup>53</sup> This new record invigorated Japan's economy and raised spirits for record growth that was last realized in 2008. This was good news for the economy, and a military altercation would have (and did) upset that upward trend.

From China's perspective, the import and export numbers were comparable. China imported US\$ 176,736 million worth of goods from Japan.<sup>54</sup> After the Chinese trawler incident, China reportedly blocked exports of its rare-earth minerals to Japan.<sup>55</sup> This was an example of one publicized retaliatory and quite possibly "necessary measure" that China took to level the playing field. It was rather significant too, due to Japan's reliance on rare-earth minerals used heavily in technology production.

Although Japan was third on China's top export list, China topped both imports and exports for Japan. This is a good indicator for high inter-relatability and need to keep tensions low. These rankings stayed the same in the following year fiscal year, given that the 2010 trawler incident happened late in the fourth quarter. Since the early 1990s, China, Japan, and South Korea—the major states in Northeast Asia—have gradually deepened economic interdependence through expanding trade and investment. The share of intraregional trade among the three states increased from 12.3 percent in 1990 to 19.0

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<sup>51</sup> Daniel Workman, "China's Top Trading Partners," World's Top Exports, accessed August 5, 2019, <http://www.worldstopexports.com/chinas-top-import-partners/>; Yoshimatsu, "Economic-Security Linkages in Asia," 2.

<sup>52</sup> World Integrated Trade Solution, "Japan Trade Summary, 2010," accessed June 1, 2019, <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/JPN/Year/2010/SummaryText>.

<sup>53</sup> Japan International Freighters Forwarders Association Inc., "Japan-China Trade Hits Records in First Half 2010," accessed June 1, 2019, <https://www.jiffa.or.jp/en/news/100820.html>.

<sup>54</sup> World Integrated Trade Solutions, "China Trade Summary, 2010," accessed June 1, 2019, <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/CHN/Year/2010/SummaryText>.

<sup>55</sup> Keith Bradsher, "Amid Tensions, China Blocks Vital Exports to Japan," *New York Times*, September 23, 2010, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/23/business/global/23rare.html?auth=login-smartlock>.

percent in 1996 and to 21.9 percent in 2010.<sup>56</sup> The interdependency of the region vis-à-vis economics is surprisingly strong.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Gradual but increased escalation on both sides seemed to have become the new normal without aggressively drawing attention to the dispute. As such, it is hard to deny both countries' increased reliance on military measures. Japan did not appear to relent because to relinquish the islets would appear subservient to China as well as diminish any political currency the current party had with the people. This was something that Japan had fought against since the Sino Japanese War of 1895. China did not seem as perturbed to maintain this gradual escalation. Unlike Japan, China was able to devote a larger percentage of their budget and resources to military. Despite seeming more militaristic, it was the use of the military that was the determining factor.

Both sides have invested far too much in remembering what was done to the other for these islands. That memory is what feeds the increased militarism over territorial conflict, but it is the economic stability that tempers it. Though neither side appears to be prepared to go to war over these islands, Japan is concerned with maintaining ownership of the islands. China, in recent years, changed the status quo to either suit its own needs or provoke Japan to react negatively to that change. Whether or not the diplomats from both countries can broker an agreement remains to be seen. One common theme among Chinese and Japanese disputes is postponing—solving the problem for another day in favor of benefitting economically. Based on the historical review of the 2010 incident, and review of subsequent maritime actions on both sides, the island dispute has led to increased military nationalism after a territorial clash or incident between the two countries, though it has not yet escalated to the point of war. Both countries are less prepared to invest in starting a conventional war because it would disrupt the current economic stability and profitability both countries have achieved. The recurring trend is that this dispute is

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<sup>56</sup> Paul O'Shea, "How Economic, Strategic, and Domestic Factors Shape Patterns of Conflict and Cooperation in the East China Sea Dispute," *Asian survey*, vol. 55, no. 3, (May/June 2015): 558. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/as.2015.55.3.348>

continually pushed to the next generation. How long can both countries hold this status quo before it crumbles under external pressures?

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### **III. 2012 INCIDENT: JAPAN PURCHASES ISLANDS**

This chapter examines the incident that occurred on September 10, 2012, when the Japanese government purchased the islands from their private owner to prevent then-Tokyo Governor Ishihara from doing so. Though the actions of the Japanese government were upsetting to the Chinese, the government's purchase of the islands put the focus on the entirety of Japan instead of a single prefecture. This chapter will mainly exclude much of the military actions discussed in the previous chapter. However, that does not exclude how much military actions, or lack thereof, have affected the outcome. Since both countries are still heavily involved in each other's economic well-being, both will do what they can to maintain a stable economy, which is another reason that economics are a much larger factor in changing or keeping the status quo in this dispute.

#### **A. BEFORE THE PURCHASE**

Over the longer term, the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island dispute is one small blip in the two economically interdependent countries. Both countries have made efforts to “maintain the lucrative trade and investment relations that both countries have enjoyed since 1972.”<sup>57</sup> This reaffirms the fact that “...high levels of economic interdependence between states reduce the likelihood of conflict and war...”<sup>58</sup> However, “...the changing nature of the Sino-Japanese economic relationship enabled China to act more assertively as its economic dependence on Japan decreased.”<sup>59</sup> There is an estimated \$350 billion trade comprised of goods and services annually between the two countries.<sup>60</sup> This number has been typical

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<sup>57</sup> Min Gyo Koo, “The Senkaku/Diaoyu Dispute and Sino-Japanese Political-Economic Relations: Cold Politics and Hot Economics?” *The Pacific Review* 22, no. 2 (2009): 228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512740902815342>.

<sup>58</sup> O'Shea, “How Economic, Strategic, and Domestic Factors Shape Patterns of Conflict and Cooperation in the East China Sea Dispute,” 557.

<sup>59</sup> O'Shea, 558–559.

<sup>60</sup> Ryan Furhmann, “The Relationship Between Japanese And Chinese Economies,” Investopedia, accessed April 04, 2019, <https://www.investopedia.com/financial-edge/1112/the-relationship-between-japanese-and-chinese-economies.aspx>.

over the years of their economic relationship and is relevant to the behaviors and attitudinal changes that occurred after the purchase (as discussed in the next section).

Since 2008, (and to include the incidents discussed in the last chapter), there have been several overtures to develop and strengthen the maritime relationships and communication pathways between China and Japan. “These include the Japan-China Maritime Communications Mechanism (JCMCM), the Maritime Search and Rescue Cooperation Agreement (SAR Agreement), and the High-Level Consultation on Maritime Affairs (High Level Consultation)....[N]one of the three agreements has been signed or implemented.”<sup>61</sup> The close encounters between the two countries’ ships seem to drive diplomatic meetings. But nothing was resolved during those diplomatic meetings because neither country was willing to concede their claims.

In 2012, several events foreshadowed the purchase of the islands later that year.

Early on, the Japanese government announced the intent to and named several of the Senkaku and other islands.<sup>62</sup> On January 26, Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura announced the government’s intent to name several of Japan’s distant islands, an action which sparked little interest from the British Broadcasting Channel, and none from any Japanese newspapers translated to English. Three months later, Japan extended the naming to register one of the Senkaku Islands as a national asset. The media mentioned the 2010 rare earths sanctions China enacted, but nothing about the registration and increased claim to sovereignty.

In April, Tokyo Governor Ishihara Shintaro revealed that the Tokyo Municipal Government planned to purchase three of the privately owned islands. A week and a half later, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government opened a bank account for the people.<sup>63</sup> None of this information was published by the Japanese (and subsequently translated to English) news sources until the next day by The Japan Times. Instead of adding emotion to the

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<sup>61</sup> James Pryztup, John Bradford, and James Manicom, “Japan-China Maritime Confidence Building and Communications Mechanisms,” *Pacific Forum*, no. 67 (August 20, 2013).

<sup>62</sup> Search Results, Comparative Connections Chronologies, accessed April 20, 2018, <http://cc.csis.org/?relations=24&s=senkaku+%2B+island&pt=date>.

<sup>63</sup> Comparative Connections Chronologies.

article, it was factual and to the point. Despite the subjective reporting, Tokyo's actions opened an avenue for nationalist sentiment to foment. Strangely enough, during the remaining two months, the government's overt support of Japanese ownership of the Senkaku Islands did not make the news at all.

That summer, Tokyo filed a petition to survey the land; there were Chinese, Taiwanese, and Hong Kong reactions to civilians landing on the islands. *The Japan Times* published two stories in as many days about Japan's efforts to stake claim to the islands. The first story on August 25, 2012, argued for peace, by insisting that both governments exercise self-restraint and "prevent provocative actions by their citizens."<sup>64</sup> This article preempts the government announcement of island purchase as if it was a cautionary tale of self-restraint to future reactions. On September 4, 2012, the Japanese government announced that purchase plans were being finalized.<sup>65</sup> The second article reported that over 1.4 billion yen<sup>66</sup> was raised in the bank account the Tokyo government opened back in April.<sup>67</sup> This is the first example of quantitative data that indicated how much the public supported their country's claim. When the Japanese government formally announced that it had purchased the islands, *The Japan Times* published a lengthy article that gave an overview of reasons why Japanese citizens should support the purchase and what the Japanese Coast Guard has been doing to bolster defenses in the region.<sup>68</sup> One of the articles implies that such measures, though necessary in order to protect Japanese assets, should not be needed because Japan conducted surveys in 1895 to determine ownership.<sup>69</sup> With those facts and plans in place, Japan officially bought the Senkaku Islands from their private owner on September 10, 2012.

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<sup>64</sup> "Nationalism over the Senkakus," *The Japan Times*, August 25, 2012, ProQuest.

<sup>65</sup> Comparative Connections Chronologies.

<sup>66</sup> To give a rough estimate of the approximate worth of the money collected, according to 2012's exchange rate, 1.4 billion yen was approximately equivalent to 12.7 million U.S. dollars. Data derived from [www.exchange-rates.org](http://www.exchange-rates.org).

<sup>67</sup> "Nationalism over the Senkakus."

<sup>68</sup> Ayako Mie, "Isle row Rule No. 1: Protect what you have," *The Japan Times*, September 11, 2012, ProQuest.

<sup>69</sup> Masami Ito, "N2 billion deal nationalizes the Senkakus," *The Japan Times*, September 12, 2012, ProQuest.

## B. AFTER THE PURCHASE

By purchasing the islands, Japan sent a message to the rest of the world that these islands belong only to Japan and no one else. Most Japanese consider the Senkaku Islands as Japanese, and to change that perception would be difficult. For this reason, combined with “the spirit of Japan” mentality, perception and national sentiment could deter any future chance at finding resolution to the disputed islands.

The people, the state, historical memory, and the media are responsible for creating China’s behavior toward and image of Japan. “People in China see every Japanese act through the lens of history and fail to recognize the impact of China’s own actions on Japan.”<sup>70</sup> Those same people think that stronger government policy measures should be taken against Japan.<sup>71</sup> One citizen said they would donate their life if the army fought against Japan, instead of donating merely a month’s salary if the Chinese army fought against Taiwan or even a year’s worth of wages if the Chinese army fought against the United States.<sup>72</sup>

State nationalism is driven from the top down and affects people’s beliefs.<sup>73</sup> It has three features. One, “it identifies the Chinese Nation closely with the communist state....The state claims it represents the whole nation and advances the nations’ interests rather than just the interests of the state.”<sup>74</sup> Two, “Chinese state nationalism is guided by pragmatism, which by definition is behavior disciplined by neither a set of values nor established principles.”<sup>75</sup> This runs in concert with Deng Xiaoping’s allegory about the economy: a cat is a cat as long as it catches mice, it does not matter if it is black or white. In other words, as long as it fulfills its’ purpose, its’ color or form does not matter. And thirdly, “in response to perceived foreign pressure that was said to erode, corrode or

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<sup>70</sup> Susan Shirk, *Fragile Superpower*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 146, Kindle.

<sup>71</sup> Shirk, 152.

<sup>72</sup> Shirk.

<sup>73</sup> Zhao, “Foreign Policy Implications,” 537.

<sup>74</sup> Zhao.

<sup>75</sup> Zhao.



endanger the national interest of China, state nationalism...was more reactive than proactive in international affairs.”<sup>76</sup>

Given that annual trade between China and Japan was upwards of \$350 billion before Japan purchased the islands, that statistic was at odds with what happened after the purchase.<sup>77</sup> As alluded to in the previous section, after Japan announced its plan to purchase the islands, the Chinese government issued a “...series of economic retaliatory measures, including boycotting Japanese products and delaying working visas for Japanese company employees.”<sup>78</sup>

This informal Chinese boycott of Japanese goods has led to a sharp fall in Japan’s exports to China, raising the risk of another Japanese recession. China remains Japan’s largest overseas market.<sup>79</sup> This has led to the belief among many Chinese leaders “...that Japan needs China more than China needs Japan.”<sup>80</sup> China set that tone by its diplomatic and military actions after this incident.

One article from *Daily Yomiuri* printed in early October encouraged the government to correct China’s propaganda and at the same time support Foreign Minister Gamba’s call for open dialogue to reduce tensions.<sup>81</sup> Though not a newspaper article, the Japanese Foreign Ministry published a position paper in response to China’s continued “unilateral escalat [ion]” at the end of the year.<sup>82</sup> This is in addition to an editorial that condemns China’s actions as uncalled-for intrusions.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Zhao, “Foreign Policy Implications,” 537.

<sup>77</sup> Furhmann, “The Relationship Between Japanese And Chinese Economies.”

<sup>78</sup> Zhao, “Foreign Policy Implications,” 552.

<sup>79</sup> Brahma Chellaney, “East Asia’s Defining Moment,” *The New York Times*, Vol 162, Issue 55993, December 22, 2012, ProQuest.

<sup>80</sup> O’Shea, “Patterns of Conflict,” 559.

<sup>81</sup> “Editorial; Govt should counter China’s propaganda on Senkakus,” *The Daily Yomiuri* (Tokyo), October 4, 2012, ProQuest.

<sup>82</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Position Paper: Japan-China Relations Surrounding the Situation of the Senkaku Islands,” accessed December 18, 2019, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/senkaku/position\\_paper2\\_en.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/senkaku/position_paper2_en.html)

<sup>83</sup> “Editorial; China’s provocative acts are beyond the pale,” *The Daily Yomiuri* (Tokyo), December 19, 2012, ProQuest.

As discussed more thoroughly in the previous chapter, China's military response is probably the most visible of their reactions to the purchase of the islands. Though that does not mean it is absent from diplomatic overtures as well. The most prevalent was its' display of "warships to support its sovereignty claims."<sup>84</sup> The Japanese kept better published records of each incursion than the Chinese. China sent a signal of displeasure when it cancelled the military exchange program with the Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF) in 2012 due to the Japan's nationalization of the islands.<sup>85</sup> In 2013, China announced a new Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), with several strict measures for aircraft that intended to cross its' boundaries.<sup>86</sup> Several countries, including Japan and the United States disagreed and refused to comply but China's response to those infractions was minimal.<sup>87</sup>

Chinese Foreign Ministry created a precedent of being difficult to work with, which caused inherent difficulties for foreign ministries such as Japan's, to discuss possible resolutions to their problems. The Chinese Foreign Ministry is extremely fragmented and information sharing is low on its priority list.<sup>88</sup> That is unfortunately due to "the relative low priority of foreign affairs compared to domestic concerns like economic growth and political stability."<sup>89</sup> Japan has no way of knowing if their messages to China's ministers "reach the higher levels of Beijing's authority structure."<sup>90</sup> It has been noted that there is a "relative weakness of the Chinese Foreign Ministry against its Japanese counterpart."<sup>91</sup> This is probably caused by the perception that the Chinese Foreign Ministry has less

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<sup>84</sup> Zhao, "Foreign Policy Implications," 550.

<sup>85</sup> Search Results, Jane's, accessed June 15, 2018, [https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/FG\\_904442-JDW\\_](https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/FG_904442-JDW_), accessed June 15, 2018.

<sup>86</sup> Zhu Feng, "China's First ADIZ Decision: One Year Later," *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, November 25, 2014, <https://amti.csis.org/chinas-first-adiz-decision-one-year-later/>.

<sup>87</sup> Feng.

<sup>88</sup> Sanaa Yasmin Hafeez, "The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands Crises of 2004, 2010, and 2012: A Study of Japanese-Chinese Crisis Management," *Asia-Pacific Review* 22, no. 1 (2015): 89, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13439006.2015.1038885>.

<sup>89</sup> Hafeez.

<sup>90</sup> Hafeez, 90.

<sup>91</sup> Hafeez, 89.

authority and influence relative to the rest of the government.<sup>92</sup> It is also important to note that “Sino-Japanese fisheries relationship is built on over 50 years of dialogue on...issues that preceded the establishment of formal diplomatic relations.”<sup>93</sup>

China’s government “head [ed] off a military confrontation over the oil and gas fields through quiet negotiation” even though China made motions to take Japan to International Court, that action never materialized.<sup>94</sup> Instead, China took other forms of “...necessary measures to defend its sovereignty.”<sup>95</sup> Instead of raising the stakes, China did not let the matter go, but still maintained some semblance of a status quo to allow for continued trade between the two countries.

China did not take Japan to International Court, however. Instead, China continued to maintain that the purchase is “illegal and invalid.”<sup>96</sup> In a statement that Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei made, he emphasized the criminality of Japan’s actions in order to assert their sovereignty and legitimacy. He used the phrase “necessary measures,” which was vague and undetermined. That gives China the leeway of continual interpretation of their words and flexibility in their execution. Based on China’s actions, these measures have included increased maritime activity in not only the Senkaku/Diaoyu Island chain, but also several islands in the South China Sea. The more assertive these actions were, the less effective backchannel diplomacy became.

One interpretation of China’s necessary measures is evidenced by their stalling tactics. China has used what some call a delaying strategy, where the government “tries to hold what it has without using [more] force to escalate the issue.”<sup>97</sup> In the case of the purchase of the islands, China did the opposite: it “sen [t] patrol ships into the water within

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<sup>92</sup> Hafeez, “Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands Crises,” 89.

<sup>93</sup> James Manicom, “China-Japan Maritime Relations: The Case of Cautious Optimism,” *Pacific Forum*, no. 11 (February 14, 2013): 1–2, JSTOR.

<sup>94</sup> Shirk, *Fragile Superpower*, 147.

<sup>95</sup> Justin McCurry, “Japan Stokes Tensions with China Over Plan to Buy Disputed Islands,” *The Guardian*, September 5, 2012, ProQuest.

<sup>96</sup> McCurry.

<sup>97</sup> Zhao, “Foreign Policy Implications,” 547.

12 nautical miles of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands.”<sup>98</sup> According to Japanese records, Chinese vessels demonstrated increased activity in 2012, likely in response to Tokyo’s official purchase of the islands from Koga on September 11. A RAND study showed Chinese Coast Guard vessels intruded 68 times in the remainder of 2012.<sup>99</sup> Despite all that, economic stability remained steady.

Deng Xiaoping once said that China’s greatest problem is the threat of instability.<sup>100</sup> To maintain stability China must keep its people happy. To keep its people happy, China must maintain their improved standard of life. The easiest method is vis-à-vis economic prosperity. China must balance the demands of the people with its economic, international, and military agenda. Until the population makes the island dispute an issue that keeps President Xi Jinping up at night, China’s continued efforts should remain minimal. Since 2012, China has not used severe enough measures to incite stronger Japanese backlash regarding the islands, but the measures China has enacted are barriers toward conflict resolution.

### C. ECONOMIC LINKAGES

In this incident, we still see some tendencies toward maintaining economic stability between China and Japan. But there are a few exceptions. Unlike in previous chapters, the purchase of the islands happened wholly on Japanese soil. This occurrence rather threatened Chinese resolve to keep economic actions stable. As Susan Shirk noted, “the government retains the ability to encourage or suppress collective action on nationalist issues like Japan: the September 2012 anti-Japanese demonstrations were facilitated from above.”<sup>101</sup> This means that any efforts to pursue regional economic cooperation can be

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<sup>98</sup> Zhao, “Foreign Policy Implications,” 552.

<sup>99</sup> Morris, “The New ‘Normal’ in the East China Sea.”

<sup>100</sup> Shirk, *Fragile Superpower*, 38.

<sup>101</sup> Susan Shirk, “The Domestic Context of Chinese Foreign Security Policies,” *The Oxford Handbook of the International Relations of Asia*, (Oxford: October 1, 2014): 18.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199916245.013.0020>.

hurt by political friction.<sup>102</sup> And the reverse is also true. An increase in political friction hurts future attempts at regional economic cooperation.

China made unprecedented responses regarding the action as a provocation to change the status quo....[This] included lodging angry protests, ratcheting up state media coverage over the nationalization, feature bellicose commentary, and tolerating for awhile the biggest anti-Japan demonstration marked by violent acts targeting Japanese interests, such as looting shops and restaurants, smashing Japanese-made cars, burning buildings of some Japanese companies and ransacking some Japanese supermarkets.<sup>103</sup>

Despite the fact that the 2012 incident adds to historical memory by “inhibit [ing] the fostering of trust among China [and] Japan,” increased commercial transactions between the two countries have worked to counter that poison.<sup>104</sup> Economic trade essentially greases the wheels of communication. As Hidetaka Yoshimatsu has observed, “increasing economic interdependence” increases “the expectation of continuity of commitment.” Just months before the purchase was announced, China, Japan and South Korea signed a trilateral investment agreement to “advance cooperation in nontraditional security issues such as piracy, energy security, cybersecurity, communicable diseases, terrorism, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).”<sup>105</sup> Unfortunately, this diplomatic overture was not enough to forestall rising tensions.

Continued political overtures attempted to smooth while military actions disrupted that economic interdependence.<sup>106</sup> Those political and military actions included purchasing the islands, collision at sea, or patrolling maritime vessels in the waters. Another one of those actions that disrupted economic communication was drilling for the “undersea hydrocarbon resources.”<sup>107</sup> Literature on the island dispute cites this as one of

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<sup>102</sup> Shirk, *Fragile Superpower*, 150–151.

<sup>103</sup> Zhao, “Foreign Policy Implications,” 552.]

<sup>104</sup> Yoshimatsu, “Economic-Security Linkages in Asia,” 2.

<sup>105</sup> Yoshimatsu, 9.

<sup>106</sup> Yoshimatsu, 2.

<sup>107</sup> O’Shea, “Patterns of Conflict,” 555.

the major factors preventing further resolution. Recent studies show that the existence of 1 trillion cubic feet of gas have hardened tensions between the two countries.

These negative implications had ripple effects to more Japanese businesses in China. One instance of negative implications occurred to the Japanese retail store, Aeon, at their Qingdao location. In this example, there were 3,000 angry protesters in from of the mall after the purchase of the islands was announced.<sup>108</sup> The Japanese government estimates that damages to the Aeon mall totaled up to 700 million yen, with up to 10 billion yen in Japanese business losses.<sup>109</sup> These losses and reaction from the Chinese population spurred Japanese businesses to reconsider continuing due to the damages.

The negative effects of political tensions were not limited to just retail sales. “[A]nalysts reported a 30 per cent decline in sales for Japanese car brands in September.”<sup>110</sup> Another business, the Nissan dealership in Qingdao, also suffered, but in a different manner. Even though the owner tried to preempt boycott of the store by posting a “banner proclaiming Chinese ownership of the islands and backing a ‘resolute boycott of Japanese goods’” his company sales still dropped and caused him to seek employment elsewhere.<sup>111</sup>

Despite the tensions caused by the 2012 incident, economic ties were maintained but did not grow. Individual companies were not the only ones that suffered from the bilateral fallout. Export and import suffered from the 2012 incident as seen from data collected by The Observatory of Economic Complexity. In 2011, China exported US\$170 billion worth in trade to Japan.<sup>112</sup> In 2012, that amount jumped an additional US\$5 billion

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<sup>108</sup> Mure Dickie, “Sparring partners; Popular protests in China over Tokyo’s attempt to secure a group of islands also claimed by Beijing are taking a toll on business—not just in Japan but also at home,” *Financial Times*, December 13, 2012: 11. *Business Insights: Essentials*, GALE A311947101.

<sup>109</sup> Dickie.

<sup>110</sup> Kevin Foley, Jeremy L. Wallace, and Jessica Chen Weiss, “The Political and Economic Consequences of National Protest in China: The 2012 Anti-Japanese Demonstrations,” 1141.

<sup>111</sup> Dickie.

<sup>112</sup> “2011 China Exports to Japan,” [https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree\\_map/hs92/export/chn/jpn/show/2011/](https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/chn/jpn/show/2011/), accessed 10 April 2020.

to US\$175 billion.<sup>113</sup> This shows some consistency in China's exports to Japan, and held true to the fact that China was more interested in maintaining economic stability overall. The following year, 2013, remains relatively high, but does show a significant change in amount exported. China's total export amount to Japan dropped by US\$11 billion, to US\$164 billion because of increased political tensions.<sup>114</sup> That was a decrease of almost 16% from 2012. In response to that decrease, 2014 export values returned to US\$172 billion, comparable with 2011 and 2012.<sup>115</sup> But that did not last for long as 2015 saw export values sink to US\$153 billion.<sup>116</sup>

In Japan, exports to China in 2011 were valued at US\$164 billion.<sup>117</sup> Unlike Japan, that number decreased to US\$148 billion in 2012.<sup>118</sup> Japan's exports further continued to stagnate or fall. Japan only exported US\$134 billion to China in 2013.<sup>119</sup> And in 2014, that number was the same.<sup>120</sup> In 2015, export values sunk to US\$116 billion.<sup>121</sup> Despite the decrease in both China and Japan's exports to the other, at least exports and imports continued to occur and remain significant.

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<sup>113</sup> "2012 China Exports to Japan," [https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree\\_map/hs92/export/chn/jpn/show/2012/](https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/chn/jpn/show/2012/), accessed 10 April 2020.

<sup>114</sup> "2013 China Exports to Japan," [https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree\\_map/hs92/export/chn/jpn/show/2013/](https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/chn/jpn/show/2013/), accessed 10 April 2020.

<sup>115</sup> "2014 China Exports to Japan," [https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree\\_map/hs92/export/chn/jpn/show/2014/](https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/chn/jpn/show/2014/), accessed 10 April 2020.

<sup>116</sup> "2015 China Exports to Japan," [https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree\\_map/hs92/export/chn/jpn/show/2015/](https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/chn/jpn/show/2015/), accessed 10 April 2020.

<sup>117</sup> "2011 Japan Exports to China," [https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree\\_map/hs92/export/jpn/chn/show/2011/](https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/jpn/chn/show/2011/), accessed 10 April 2020.

<sup>118</sup> "2012 Japan Exports to China," [https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree\\_map/hs92/export/jpn/chn/show/2012/](https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/jpn/chn/show/2012/), accessed 10 April 2020.

<sup>119</sup> "2013 Japan Exports to China," [https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree\\_map/hs92/export/jpn/chn/show/2013/](https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/jpn/chn/show/2013/), accessed 10 April 2020.

<sup>120</sup> "2014 Japan Exports to China," [https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree\\_map/hs92/export/jpn/chn/show/2014/](https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/jpn/chn/show/2014/), accessed 10 April 2020.

<sup>121</sup> "2015 Japan Exports to China," [https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree\\_map/hs92/export/jpn/chn/show/2015/](https://oec.world/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/jpn/chn/show/2015/), accessed 10 April 2020.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Japan's purchase of the islands in 2012 led to China undertaking a number of unprecedented responses, including lodging angry protests, ratcheting up state media coverage which featured bellicose commentary, and tolerating for a while the biggest anti-Japan demonstration marked by violent acts targeting Japanese interests, such as looting shops and restaurants, smashing Japanese-made cars, burning buildings of some Japanese companies and ransacking some Japanese supermarkets."<sup>122</sup> However, in the end both countries delayed conclusion of the dispute with the associated risks of disagreement in favor of economic preservation; determination to maintain and develop economic relations between China and Japan kept military actions restrained.

In 2012, while there was a slight increase in military activities compared to previous years, each country did not want to increase military friction, since it would have a ripple effect on the economic front. Despite the tensions from the 2012 incident, China and Japan's economic ties have been maintained. Although Japan's exports to China diminished over time, those exports remained in place. Although China's public protested and disputed the purchase of the islands, Japanese businesses did what they could to remain open. Both countries had to make some concessions to maintain the status quo and avoid exacerbating the situation even further. Instead, China and Japan have largely put the island issue to the side and focused on maintaining their economic ties.

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<sup>122</sup> Zhao, "Foreign Policy Implications," 552.



## IV. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter looks at the possible implications of the dispute and the options the two countries may pursue. Given the norm that “a state tends to enhance trade with an ally while it is reluctant to promote trade with an adversary,”<sup>123</sup> economic stability was largely the motivational factor between the two countries. But the most significant reason the two countries have come to a standstill regarding their policies and overtures is an imbalance of power. Each country wants “to improve its security position by creating asymmetries in its economic and strategic relationships with” the other.<sup>124</sup> And each country will try to create that unsteady imbalance just enough to maintain a strong economy coupled with “economic power and political influence.”<sup>125</sup>

China and Japan hesitate to change the way they have been approaching the dispute. Each assumes it has the upper hand in terms of the strategic relationship with the other. Any change in that might upset the status quo. Both countries have been consistently at odds with each other. Will the economic overtures help make things better diplomatically and militarily or will each see the other as encroaching upon their rightful territory? Which is more likely to foment more dangerous activities or popular protests among their people? While both countries are dealing with various social issues that affect their economic status, neither would be prepared for a pending upset or worst-case scenario of war that could ensue. Could China strengthen its position with everyone else in the region without Japan’s input?

The sole cause of conflict over any number of items is the two countries’ differing perspectives on the same issue. Each country can see its own side of the coin clearly but may have issues looking over to the other side. Fused with that misperception notion from the beginning, the strong beliefs of nationalism, specifically military nationalism, have not gone unnoticed by both parties. Indeed, in a study done by Han-Yi Shaw in 1999, prior to

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<sup>123</sup> Yoshimatsu, “Economic-Security Linkages in Asia,” 8.

<sup>124</sup> Yoshimatsu.

<sup>125</sup> Yoshimatsu.

this event, the same recommendation was made to “refrain from provocative actions based on unquestioned self-righteousness and intolerance of the others’ argument...[to head toward] a rational and equitable solution.”<sup>126</sup>

In all the possible reactions to each country’s overtures regarding the islands there could have been several different outcomes—ranging from the most peaceful to the most violent. However, none of these happened as resolution efforts have continually been delayed for future deliberation.

One of the options is outright resolution of the dispute: to determine which country gets what part of the islands or if none have any claim at all. The discussion above has tried to parse out the different factors that are barriers to resolution, namely, economic, but also nationalism, diplomacy, and military strength. These factors have created images of preconceived notions on both sides. With as many varying opinions each country has over the years of this dispute, the most neutral option would be to create a no-man’s land of the islands, so that neither country has access to it. However, that would take time and money and manpower that none of the other countries in the region would be able to support. Of all the outcomes, this option would be the most peaceful.

As previously mentioned, China’s delaying strategy uses minimal but slightly increasing amount of force to hold what it has claimed without drawing too much attention to the issue. However, when both sides push the issue at what point might China provoke a retaliation from Japan? At what point might Japan provoke a retaliation from China? And if so, what kind of reaction might occur? The most violent outcome would be war between “China and Japan, the two largest economies and largest militaries in Asia....”<sup>127</sup> This is the most violent and unstable outcome. Although war would generate some economic stimulation within each country, it would disrupt the trade routes that are already and continuing to be built by both countries. War would cause more problems that it would solve. Due to the large volume of trade in the region, economic instability due to war would cause a global ripple effect.

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<sup>126</sup> Shaw, “The Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands Dispute,” 133.

<sup>127</sup> Shirk, *Fragile Superpower*, 147.

Another outcome could involve the development of joint exercises between the two countries. This would not be as radical as complete resolution but allow the two militaries to work together in such a contested geographic area. On a similar note, “Singapore’s PM Lee Hsien Loong urged China and Japan to ‘moderate nationalist sentiment...work toward reconciliation...and come to terms with the history of the Second World War the way Germany and France have done in Europe.’”<sup>128</sup> Only history will tell if Beijing and Tokyo can arrive at such an arrangement.

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<sup>128</sup> Shirk, *Fragile Superpower*, 150.

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