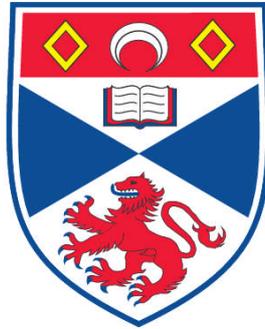


**UNCHARTED WATERS IN A NEW ERA: AN ACTOR-CENTERED  
CONSTRUCTIVIST LIBERAL APPROACH TO THE EAST CHINA SEA  
DISPUTES, 2003-2008**

**Senan Fox**

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
at the  
University of St. Andrews**



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***Uncharted Waters in a New Era: An Actor-Centered  
Constructivist Liberal Approach to the East China Sea  
Disputes, 2003 - 2008***

PhD thesis

submitted to the

School of International Relations, University of St. Andrews

***Senan Fox***

August 18<sup>th</sup> 2011

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To quote George Moore, 'A man travels the world over in search of what he needs, and returns home to find it.'

## Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation
ARF	Asian Regional Forum
CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
CCJPMRAOA	Committee for Coordination of Joint Prospecting for Mineral Resources in Asian Offshore Areas
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CICIR	China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations
CIIS	China Institute of International Studies
CMC	Central Military Commission
CMCCP	Central Military Commission of the Communist Party
CMCPRC	Central Military Commission of the PRC
CNOOC	China National Offshore Oil Corporation
DPJ	Democratic Party of Japan
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EAS	East Asian Summit
ECS	East China Sea
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
INCSEA	Incidents at Sea Agreement
JABF	Japan Association of Bereaved Families

JASDF	Japan Air Self-Defense Force
JBIC	Japan Bank of International Co-operation
JCG	Japan Coast Guard
JDA	Japan Defense Agency
JMSA	Japanese Maritime Safety Agency
JMSDF	Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party (Japan)
METI	Ministry of Economics, Trade, and Industry
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan)
NCCPC	National Congress of the Communist Party of China
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NPC	National People's Congress
NPCSC	National People's Congress Standing Committee
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OPRF	Ocean Policy Research Foundation (Tokyo)
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
PRC	People's Republic of China
PSC	Politburo Standing Committee
SASS	Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences
SCSC	State Council's Standing Committee
SIIS	Shanghai Institutes for International Studies
SLOC	Sea Lines of Communication
TMD	Theater Missile Defense
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

UNECAFE

UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East

UNSC

United Nations Security Council

USAF

United States Air Force

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the deep bilateral tensions surrounding the East China Sea (ECS) disagreements between Japan and the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the period from August 19<sup>th</sup> 2003 to June 18<sup>th</sup> 2008 from an actor-centred constructivist liberal viewpoint. The East China Sea disputes could be described as a conflicting difference of opinion over a) the demarcation of maritime territory and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) in which potentially significant energy deposits exist and b) the ownership of the strategically important and historically sensitive Pinnacle (*Senkaku/Diaoyu*) Islands. This research addresses the question of why, given the fact that China and Japan have a strong interest in co-operation and stable relations with each other, small incidents in the ECS blow up into larger problems, cause approaches to the East China Sea to wax and wane, and move the relationship in a direction that goes against preferred national objectives? In attempting to unravel this puzzle, this work argues that domestic politics and popular negative sentiment have been the major issues that have greatly amplified and politicised the ECS problems and have significantly affected positive progress in negotiations aimed at managing and stabilising these disputes. By examining these, the thesis addresses the question of why China and Japan have been so constrained in their attempts to find a workable bilateral agreement over disputed energy resources and demarcation in the East China Sea. It also indirectly deals with the question of why the conflicting legal complexities surrounding these disagreements contributed to both states so fervently maintaining and defending their claims.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Background to the Resurgence of the East China Sea Disputes, August 2003 - June 2008**

#### **Research Question**

This thesis examines the deep bilateral tensions surrounding the East China Sea (ECS) disagreements between Japan and the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the period from August 19<sup>th</sup> 2003 to June 18<sup>th</sup> 2008<sup>1</sup> from an actor-centred constructivist liberal viewpoint. The East China Sea disputes could be described as a conflicting difference of opinion over a) the demarcation of maritime territory and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) in which potentially significant energy deposits exist and b) the ownership of the strategically important and historically sensitive Pinnacle Islands. Both the islands and the demarcation disputes are seen as interlinked by the majority of observers, a fact which serves to further complicate any possible solution to these disputes (Drifte, 2008a:3). The islands component of these disputes is largely a legacy of the two countries' histories. The maritime delimitation component however is relatively new with disagreements arising out of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

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<sup>1</sup> These dates were chosen because August 19<sup>th</sup> 2003 represented the date in which a new dimension to the decades-long ECS disputes re-surfaced with China's decision to commence production at the *Chunxiao* gas field in an area disputed by Japan. June 18<sup>th</sup> 2008 was chosen because it marked the symbolic signing of the 'principled consensus' bilateral agreement on the ECS which represented the improvement made in the relationship after the low point of 2005 when ties were marked the worst period in bilateral relations since the normalization of ties in 1972. The years 2003 to 2006 are thus viewed as years in which the post-2002 tensions reached their worst point. The years from 2006 to 2008 were years in which repairs to damaged bilateral ties were made leading to the June 18<sup>th</sup> 2008 ECS agreement.

(UNCLOS), coming into force in November 1994 and ratified by both China and Japan in June 1996 (Pan, 2009:136). Ever since, Japan has used the Pinnacle Islands as a baseline from which to legally lay claim to a sizeable area of maritime territory as its EEZ. China protests this and thus both the islands and delimitation issues are seen to be closely related.<sup>2</sup> This research addresses the question of why, given the fact that China and Japan have a strong interest in co-operation and stable relations with each other, do small incidents in the ECS blow up into larger problems, cause approaches to the East China Sea to wax and wane, and move the relationship in a direction that goes against preferred national objectives? In attempting to unravel this puzzle, this work tackles the question of how domestic politics and popular negative sentiment greatly amplified and politicised these disputes. It also addresses the question of why the conflicting legal complexities surrounding these disagreements contributed to both states so fervently maintaining and defending their claims.

The East China Sea is one of the few areas where the security interests of Japan and China intersect in close physical proximity to each other on a day to day basis. It is also one of the last unexplored high-potential resource areas located near large markets. As expressed by one Japanese scholar, ‘If there is a flash point to ignite a third Sino-Japanese War, it will be the ownership of the Diaoyu Islands in the ECS’ (Suganuma, 2000:11). Given that their shared sea is such a potential flashpoint between two of Asia’s two powerful states, it is interesting to note that although the ECS has been discussed in

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<sup>2</sup> These islands are known as the *Senkaku Shoto* in Japanese and the *Diaoyu* in Chinese. For the purposes of neutrality, the disputed islands in the East China Sea will be referred to by their nineteenth century English name, the Pinnacle Islands.

numerous publications, very little so far has been written on the inter-relationship between the resurgence of the ECS problems after 2002 and domestic politics and negative popular sentiment. As such, and as argued in this thesis, more deserves to be said about how they relate to each other, and about those issues that significantly exacerbate these maritime frictions.

### **Contexts**

In appreciating the role of the ECS in the bilateral relationship, there are several important considerations which are all contained within the inter-related security, legal, geographical, and political contexts of the East China Sea disagreements. These are: a) security factors such as the bilateral security structure, the potential energy, mineral, and natural resources in the ECS, and the strategic value of the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs); b) the important geographical location of the East China Sea; c) conflicting interpretations of the ambiguous UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and d) the considerable influence of domestic politics and popular negative sentiment on approaches to these disputes.

## Security Context

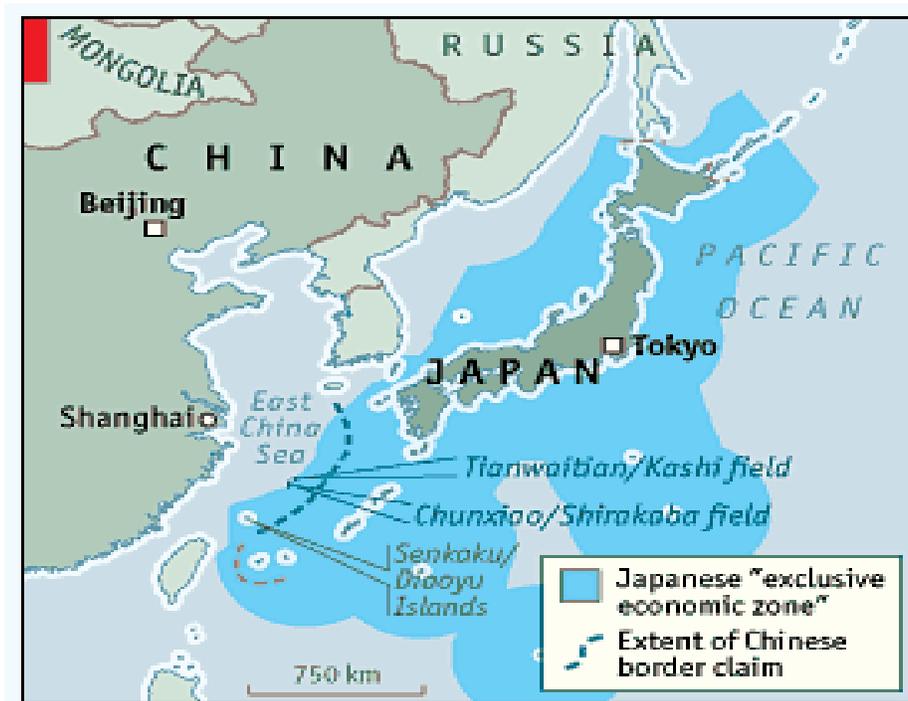
In the first place, there is the issue of the security structure and the lack of an adequate security management regime in North-East Asia.<sup>3</sup> This weak structure remains closely related to one suited to a Cold War environment, where Beijing remains cautious of any real or imagined US-Japanese attempts to contain a rising China and its growing military capabilities, a fact that inhibits China's ability to engage in regional security activities. China thus views the security implications of the ECS disputes through both a traditional and non-traditional lens, where issues such as maritime piracy and terrorism provide both states with opportunities and challenges for co-operation (Cai, 2007: 57). The East China Sea is also at the end of one of the world's most vital SLOCs that connects the Middle East to North-east Asia. As such, the sea represents a choke point where both China and Japan need to jointly co-operate to ensure safe and reliable access for their ships for the benefit of both economies (Hideaki Kaneda, 13/12/2007). Japan and China's security concerns in the area are also fed by the actual and potential value of energy, mineral and other natural resources in the East China Sea and also by the importance of the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) for the security and prosperity of both states.

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<sup>3</sup> The Japanese and Chinese names used in this thesis are formatted according to how they normally appear in English language publications (and name cards, conference proceedings etc.).

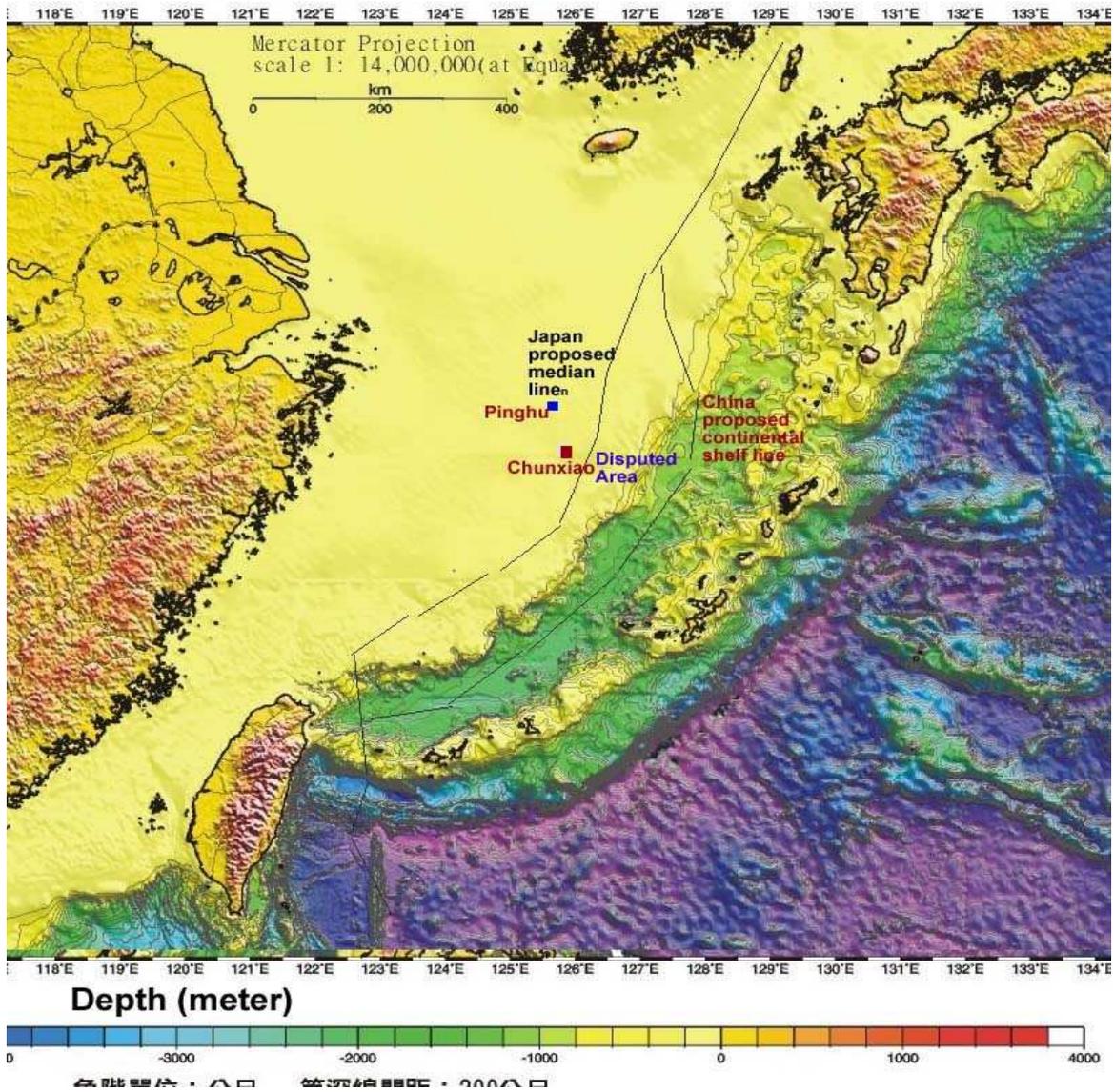
## Geographical Context

The second factor is the the important geographical location of the East China Sea. In a case like this where geography is such an important component, it is necessary to briefly describe to the reader the geographical features of the East China Sea, along with its oil and gas potential.



Map highlighting the extent of Japan's claimed Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Note how the uninhabited Pinnacle (*Senkaku/Diaoyu*) Islands permit Japan to claim an EEZ that pushes deeper into the East China Sea. Source: <http://ishingen.wordpress.com/2007/03/27/desired-ground-part-three/> Accessed on 28/06/2009.

# East Asia Topography and Bathymetry Map



Topographical and Bathymetrical Map of the East China Sea with the continental shelf highlighted in cream colour. Two of the contentious gas fields are also shown with their Chinese names. The PRC's claimed maritime territory extends as far as the axis of Okinawan (*Liuqiu*) Trough shown in the green area.  
Source: <http://sun-bin.blogspot.com/2005/11/chinas-bargaining-power-on-east-china.html>.  
Accessed on 28/06/2009.

The East China Sea lies virtually surrounded on all sides by China, Japan, Taiwan and the Korean peninsula. Looking at the above map, one can see that the ECS is located between the Chinese mainland and the Japanese Okinawan islands (*Liuqiu* in Chinese). Connected to the Yellow Sea to the north and the South China Sea to its south, the ECS' northern perimeter stretches from the north of the *Yangtze* River estuary across to South Korea's *Jeju* Island. On its southern perimeter, the sea connects with the South China Sea extending from mainland China's *Guangdong* Province's *Nan'ao* Island and the south of Taiwan Island and then eastward where it is fenced off from the Pacific Ocean by Japan's southern *Kyushu* Island, the Japanese Okinawan Archipelago and the island of Taiwan. Located between mainland China's eastern shores and the Pacific Ocean, the exact size of the ECS varies according to the source. According to one Chinese scholar, this semi-closed sea covers an area of close to 770,000 square kilometers (or 415,766 square nautical miles (nm)) of which the continental shelf area takes up approximately 460,000 square kilometers (Zhao, 2004:29).

Western sources however tend to agree that the sea's total area consists of about 300,000 square kilometers (or roughly 162,000 square nm). At its widest point between Japan and China, the ECS spans approximately 360 nm and only 167 nm between the two nearest points (Kien-hong Yu, 2005:106). The sea's basin is shallow and is thus conducive to resource exploration with water depths of less than 200 meters (an average depth of 72 meters) in virtually all areas with the exception of the Okinawa Trough (termed the Sino-Ryukyu Trough by the Chinese) which straddles the Japanese coast. The seabed descends very gradually from the Chinese coast until it drops sharply into this Okinawa Trough

descending to a maximum depth of almost 2,300 meters. Much interest, particularly from China, surrounds the energy prospects of a 940-square-mile area known as the *Xihu* Trough (80% of which is inside the Chinese side of the median line (explained below)), an area of seabed about two-thirds the size of Taiwan and potentially endowed with natural gas deposits estimated at 300 billion cubic feet (Hsiung, 2005:5;7-8). Estimates for the *Chunxiao* field reserves (located in the *Xihu* Trough area, and central to the resurgent ECS disputes) stand at 1.8 trillion cubic feet with a projected annually production rate of 70 billion cubic feet of gas increasing to 350 billion by 2010 (Harrison, 2005:6). As explained later however, it is difficult to find a consensus on the quantity of potential resources in the East China Sea with explorations over the years often yielding results that are far from optimal, and less than the required amount to justify the expenses involved in further exploration and production.

### Legal Context

The third issue relates to differing interpretations of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), a factor that is closely linked to access to energy and other resources as well as security concerns in the ECS (Cai, 2007: 57). For the benefit of the reader, it is crucial to outline the details of the legal disagreements between Japan and China in the East China Sea. This section divides into a number of sub-sections which discuss the two central legal disagreements in the ECS. These are a) the Pinnacle Islands sovereignty dispute and b) differences of opinion regarding the application of the theory of the median line or the extended continental shelf for the demarcation of the EEZ. This

section also aims to highlight to the reader the limited likelihood of a legal resolution to these disputes under international maritime law, and explains the reasons why China and Japan are unlikely to use bodies such as the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to find an agreement on behalf of the two neighbours.

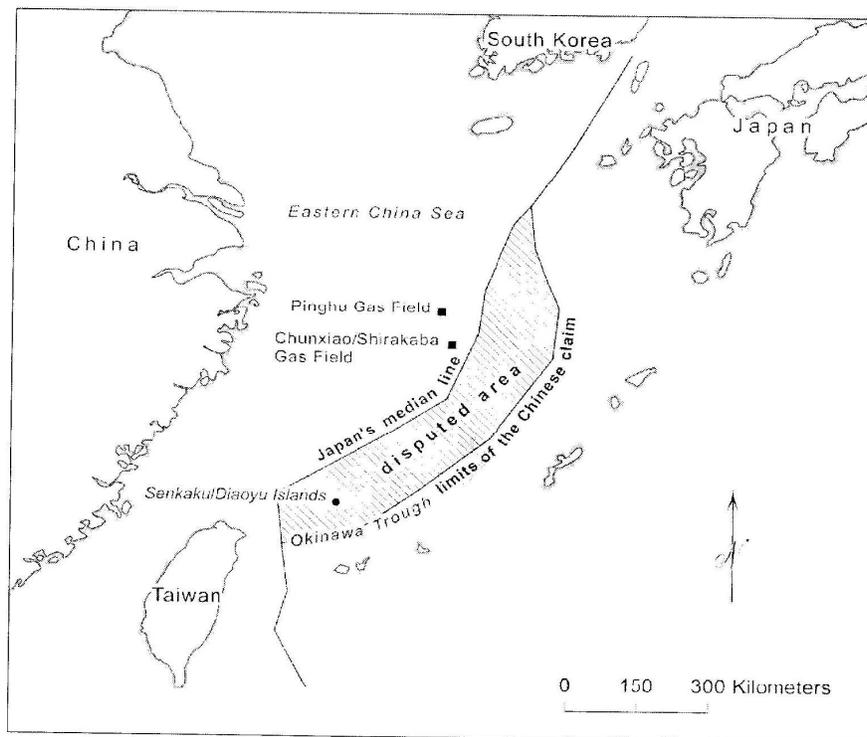


Figure 1. Map showing the disputed area in the East China Sea.

Illustration Source: (Manicom, 2008b:389).

### *The Pinnacle (Senkaku/Diaoyu) Islands*

These islands are made up of five uninhabited islets and three barren rocks that comprise of less than seven square kilometers, and are located approximately one hundred and twenty nautical miles south-west of Okinawa at the edge of the ECS' continental shelf

(Drifte, 2008a:3). Under Japanese ownership since 1895, the islands are referred to as the *Senkaku Shoto* by Japan and the *Diaoyu* by China. Ownership of the islands permits Japan to claim a large EEZ around them and also a territorial sea of up to twelve nms. The presence of Chinese vessels in proximity to these islands has been a constant source of tensions between the two neighbors. According to UNCLOS, the state which controls a territorial sea area has full sovereignty over the seabed, water surface, water column, and airspace but must allow the ‘innocent passage’ of another state’s ships and vessels (UNCLOS, Articles 2-4; 17-33). While China and Taiwan have made respective claims to the territory in the last forty years, the Japanese government maintains that the islands are an indisputable part of Japanese sovereign territory and deny any existence of a territorial dispute (MOFA spokesperson, Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23/07/1996).



Map of the Pinnacle (*Senkaku/Diaoyu*) Islands.

Source: [http://two--plus--two.blogspot.com/2008\\_12\\_01\\_archive.html](http://two--plus--two.blogspot.com/2008_12_01_archive.html). Accessed on 28/06/2009.



Photograph of some of the Pinnacle (*Senkaku/Diaoyu*) Islands. Administered by Japan but claimed by China and Taiwan. Source: <http://ishingen.wordpress.com/2007/03/27/desired-ground-part-three/> Accessed on 28/06/2009.

### *The PRC's Claims vis-à-vis the Pinnacle Islands*

China's claim to the Pinnacle Islands rests on three legal arguments. Firstly, China asserts that Japan agreed to return the islands to Taiwan along with all other 'occupied' territories under the terms of surrender following Japan's defeat in the Second World War. Japan however disputes the claim that the islands were included in any post-war agreement. Secondly, Beijing maintains that the islands are historically Chinese by virtue of the acts of prior discovery, use and ownership of the *Diaoyu*. Historical evidence of imperial China's utilization and discovery of the territories thus gives China the 'moral ground' in which to claim legal ownership. Finally, the Chinese highlight Tokyo's pre-1885 prior acknowledgement of Chinese ownership of the *Diaoyu* as evidence of Japan's alleged illegal control of the islands.

Despite this, the relatively recent Chinese claim to the islands in the late 1960s after over seventy years under uncontested Japanese control since 1895 is taken as an indication of the strength of Tokyo's claim (Wei Su, 2005:47). As Ramos-Mrosovsky observes, the reality is that from the end of the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895 until 1931 when Japan invaded China and from 1945 until 1971, periods which total some sixty-two years, 'there is no record of any Chinese government advancing the slightest claim to the islands' (Ramos-Mrosovsky, 2008:929). In particular, the first two decades after 1945, in which Beijing did very little to protest Japan's ownership of the islands, is often cited as evidence of the 'weakness' of the territorial claims made by the Chinese in the ECS. Beijing and Taipei however have challenged this view by asserting that mainland China and Taiwan's claims to the islands coincided with the reversion of the post-war US administered Okinawa and its adjoining territories to Japan in 1972 (Wei Su, 2005:47).

#### *Japan's Claims vis-à-vis the Pinnacle Islands*

The Japanese on the other hand continue to counter Beijing's claims with three arguments of their own. In the first place, Japan has legal possession over islands which Tokyo views as sovereign national territory. From the Japanese standpoint, they argue that the islands were '*terra nullius*' (vacant and unclaimed territory) before Japan formally annexed them in 1895. Secondly, the Japanese have continuously and peacefully held control and sovereignty over the 'Senkaku Islands' for over one hundred years (Heflin, 2000:3-9). International law also tends to look more favorably upon claims based on demonstrated 'effective' and continuous occupation (Ramos-Mrosovsky, 2008:914). Lastly, by virtue of the fact that China remained almost completely silent about Tokyo's

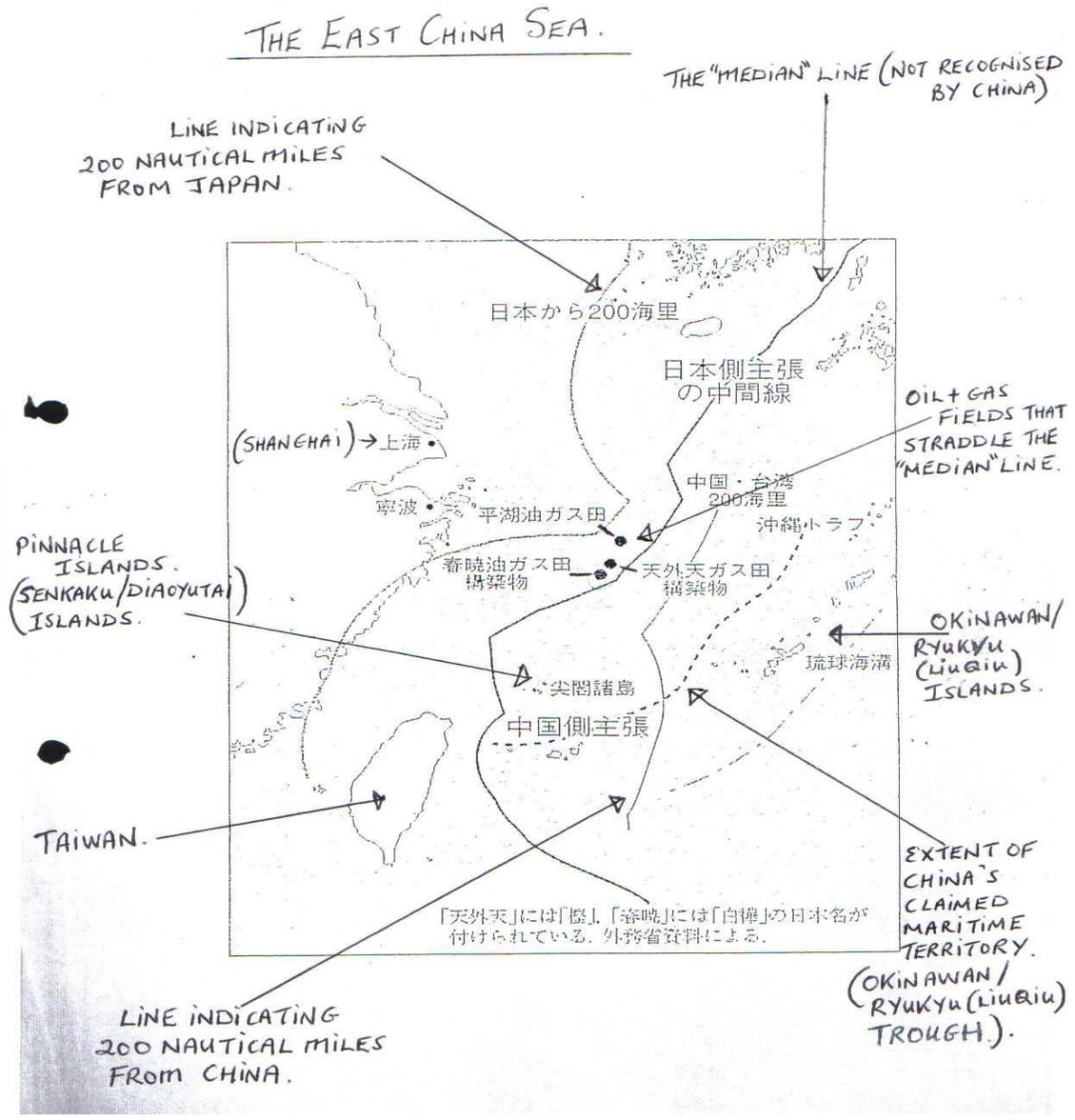
occupation for the best part of seventy years, the Japanese maintain that China acquiesced in Japan's sovereignty over the islands (Heflin, 2000:3-9).

### *The Median Line and EEZs issues*

The resurgent oil and gas dimension of the ECS disputes are directly related to developments in international maritime law in the 1990s, Japan and China's official declaration of conflicting claims in 1996, and subsequent bilateral disagreements over the median line and each state's rightful EEZ. Viewing the PRC's continental shelf natural prolongation stance as outmoded, and citing contemporaneous legal trends that seemed to favor the median line approach, Tokyo decided in 1996 to unilaterally draw a median line which it was hoped, would 'equitably' divide the overlapping EEZs (Drifte, 2008a:5).

Japan protests Chinese exploration activities near the controversial median line for a number of reasons. These include the fact that Japan fears that the Chinese might be siphoning what is considered by Tokyo to be Japanese resources from under the Japanese drawn median line and from fields that straddle the median line. China totally rejects these accusations of siphoning, citing them, amongst other reasons, as physically impossible. The median line is seen as inequitable by China and is not officially recognised by the PRC. Tokyo also uses the tiny and uninhabited Pinnacle Islands to push the median line further westward toward China. Article 121 (3) of UNCLOS for example, states: 'Rocks which cannot sustain human habitation or economic life of their own shall have no exclusive economic zone or continental shelf' (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, (UNCLOS), Article 121 (3)).

The ambiguous 1982 UNCLOS asks that states involved in a maritime territorial dispute refrain from any exploration activities in a disputed area until delimitation and EEZs are agreed. It also stipulates however that any hypothetical, temporary, or permanent median line should be based on an equitable solution that factors in issues such as length of coastline and human habitation. Under the same law, Tokyo has the right, in the absence of a mutually agreed border line, to claim 'potential authority' over an EEZ stretching up to 200 nautical miles from its coast, therefore encompassing areas beyond the median line where, since 2003, China has been very active. For Japan, the legal 'potential authority' issue means that the Tokyo government continues to argue that Chinese oil and gas fields within the overlapping area (between 200 nm from Japan's coastline and the median line) are within a contested area for as long as no final agreement exists (Drifte, 2008a:10). The Japanese also fear that the Chinese are trying to create facts on the grounds that favour the PRC in advance of a final and mutually agreed settlement. The Chinese for their part worry that Tokyo is surreptitiously attempting to make the Japanese and unilaterally drawn median line a permanent reality.



A Japanese map highlighting the issues at the center of the East China Sea disputes. Interestingly, Professor Liu Nanlai of CASS (Beijing), when shown this map during an interview (with an interpreter), argued that this map does not give a complete picture of the disputes because the continental shelf is not highlighted (Liu Nanlai , 16/09/2008). Japan argues that this trough does not mark the end of the continental shelf but is in fact a depression in a considerably larger continental shelf that includes the Okinawan (*Liuqiu*) Islands. Source: The author wishes to thank Professor Yasuji Ishigaki of Tokai University, Japan for this map (Yasuji Ishigaki , 03/10/2007).

According to UNCLOS there are two approaches to demarcate a sea boundary between two states, a median line solution or else a solution that recognizes a coastal state's rights

to its continental shelf (to a maximum of 350 nm). The continental shelf element of the 1982 convention states that a coastal country can have its continental shelf claim extended beyond the EEZ (normally up to 200 nm) to a maximum of 350 nm, provided it can prove with scientific data the geographical and geological continuity of the seabed with the state's established EEZ (Drifte, 2008b: 9). The median line element of the 1982 UNCLOS outlined in Article 76 grants to states the right to claim an EEZ of 200 nm beyond a state's baseline. In the event however that two states' potential claims overlap (i.e. their 200 nm claims), the UNCLOS solution to such a scenario is incorporated in Article 74(1). This article reads as follows: 'The delimitation of the exclusive economic zone between States with opposite or adjacent coasts shall be effected by agreement on the basis of international law ..., in order to achieve an equitable solution' (UNCLOS), Articles 74 (1), 76)).

In order to be clear then for the reader regarding Japan's adoption and the PRC's rejection of the median line, this is the middle line of the overlapping area of the 200 nm EEZ of both Japan and China and is not an overlap between Japan's 200nm EEZ stance and China's 350nm continental shelf stance. Under more straight-forward circumstances, each country has a right under UNCLOS to an EEZ that extends to a maximum of 200nm. The ECS however is less than 400 nm wide so there is an overlap between possible EEZ claims. In any case, this aspect is made redundant by the fact that China rejects a 200 nm claim. Based on the extended continental shelf theory, China claims an EEZ of more than 200 nm, i.e. as far as the axis of the Okinawa Trough which it considers the natural ending of its continental shelf where the maximum width that a state

is allowed to claim is 350 nm. It is apparent then that a significant problem is that UNCLOS is not clear about which approach, the median line or extended continental shelf, is the correct or appropriate one. The fact that South Korea has its own EEZ claim in the north of the ECS based on the extended continental shelf theory serves to further complicate any final resolution under UNCLOS' guidelines (Sakamoto, 2008:2). Under these circumstances, the PRC continues to emphasize the continental shelf argument over the 200 nm EEZ argument espoused by Japan until a mutually agreed compromise is found. Despite these lingering legal arguments however, Beijing has always kept its exploration activities to within its own side of the median line, even though it doesn't officially recognize it, out of consideration for the fact that no maritime boundary agreement exists between the two neighbors (Pan, 2009:151).

### **Domestic Politics and Popular Sentiment**

This research contends that domestic politics and popular sentiment were among the major factors that contributed to the amplification and politicization of these disputes. In the PRC, popular sentiment, the domestic political interests of the communist regime, and competition between top-level elites and constituencies played a major contributory role in constraining the leadership's ability to make more positive and constructive approaches vis-à-vis the East China Sea. In Japan, the emergence of China-related and nationalistic issues as a much more salient electoral card and sensitive issue amid unprecedented internal and external structural changes placed the ECS disputes on a

higher and more public political plain and contributed to more assertive public stand by Japanese politicians with regards to these disagreements.

This was in a context where exceptionally high levels of negative public and political sentiment, domestic politicking, and serious bilateral distrust dramatically politicized and amplified these disputes, significantly affected constructive and positive bilateral approaches to these disagreements, and influenced the ways in which the disputes manifested themselves in the 2003 to 2008 period. Signs of positive bilateral advancements in the East China Sea would include the building and enhancement of regimes aimed at conflict prevention and confidence building and even symbolic signs of progress such as the June 18<sup>th</sup> 2008 bilateral agreement, the ‘Principled Consensus on the East China Sea Issue’.<sup>4</sup> This links into the question of why the maritime frictions were so tense and why no substantial movement in confidence building could be seen in the period from 2003 to 2006.

These factors arguably owe more to the amplification and politicization of the ECS disputes from their worst period from August 2003 until the thaw in icy relations in October 2006 after the controversial Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi left office than to the actual material value of the contested islands and resources in this theatre. Noting the negative impact of such factors on bilateral relations, Katzenstein for example argues that ‘domestic politics creates political incentives in both countries to

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<sup>4</sup> The June 2008 ‘Principled Consensus on the East China Sea’ will hereafter be referred to using a shortened name, ‘Principled Consensus.’ For more information on this principled consensus, go to the following website <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/fyrth/t466632.htm>. Accessed on 20/09/2010.

magnify and exploit popular sentiments, driven by factional infighting in China and electoral strategizing in Japan'. The danger of this characteristic of the relationship is that the two neighbors run the risk of 'deepening suspicion and enmity' that could cause Tokyo and Beijing to be trapped in a negative scenario that is contrary to their stated goals of joint gains and strengthening economic interdependence (Katzenstein, 2008:23). The thesis thus stresses how the above issues negatively influenced the political atmosphere surrounding the ECS disputes, and consequently the progress of the ECS negotiations in the 2003 to 2008 period.

#### Domestic Politics and Popular Sentiment in Japan

There has been an appreciable decline in feelings of good-will in Japan towards the PRC since Beijing's ruthless crushing of student protests in Tiananmen Square in 1989. This was arguably the first of many high-profile incidents and developments that have negatively affected and tapped into latent historical Japanese attitudes towards the Chinese. Public opinion polls commissioned by the Japanese government for example have highlighted a drop in warm feelings toward China by ordinary Japanese from a high of 79% in 1980 to a low of 46% in 1997 (Austin and Harris, 2001:104). Alongside negative popular sentiment, growing fears about China's rising power developed at a time when unfortunately for Japan, its own economic strength and prowess was weakened in relation to China. Tokyo's main leverage in terms of its economic power, Official Development Assistance (ODA), although still considerable, has also been gradually decreased due to budget cuts. In 2001, Japan was replaced by the US as the

world's top ODA donor and has since 1997 seen funds set aside for ODA slashed by as much as 30% (*Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 18/04/2004). A product of such economic changes is that it has affected Japan's ability to lever concessions out of the Chinese while also undermining Japanese confidence in the power of economics in persuading Beijing to behave in ways favorable to Japan's interests.

From the Japanese perspective, the rise of China in every field has occurred alongside 'a psychological tendency in Japan to subscribe to a balance of power policy vis-à-vis China' (Matsuda, 2008:78). Situated alongside Japan's economic malaise in the 1990s and a rise of negative popular sentiment towards China, is a palpable unease about the PRC's military modernization and its exponential and non-transparent defense spending, particularly in terms of its nuclear and naval capabilities. It should be noted that anti-Chinese sentiment in Japan, though significant, is not as strong as anti-Japanese sentiment in China. Nevertheless, the behaviour of nationalistic groups and individuals has been a fundamental component in how the ECS disputes have manifested themselves over the years (Deans, 2000:124-125). In particular, the value of intensified anti-China sentiment in Japan since 1989 as an electoral and political tool has not been lost by Japan's political parties, politicians, and right-wing organisations. Seismic changes to the Japanese political and diplomatic structure vis-à-vis China in the 1990s also bestowed a much more powerful value upon public opinion and popular sentiment for Japan's political elite particularly in debates surrounding issues such as the East China Sea.

## Domestic Politics and Popular Sentiment in China

In China, the development of a more intense form of Chinese nationalism since the 1990s has given sovereignty and territorial integrity related issues such as the ECS disagreements 'intense symbolic value' (Downs and Saunders, 1998-1999: 118). Latent anti-Japanese feelings stemming largely from Japan's occupation of parts of China from 1931 to 1945 were also magnified in the 1990s as a result of the communist regime's increased use of nationalism from the top down to cement its legitimacy. The greater openness in China since the 1990s and the greater plurality of interests in Chinese society have also added more pronounced bottom up pressures that the CCP leadership must consider.

Even though the PRC's leaders still utilise socialist rhetoric to defend policies, it is clear that the post-Cold War CCP has placed an even greater emphasis on two 'potentially incompatible' objectives to legitimate its rule. The first objective focuses on presenting the CCP as the best protector of China's national interests against foreign intervention, and as the most effective means by which China will return to its historical mantle as a great economic, political, and military power. The second objective focuses in on economic goals and prosperity and asserts that CCP rule is a necessity in order to ensure political stability and a rise in living standards for all Chinese citizens. Both these nationalistic and economic objectives appeal to the interests and emotions of the Chinese populace where the CCP's power and legitimacy heavily depend on its success in attaining these goals rather than on sticking steadfastly to the CCP's more traditional ideological principles (Downs and Saunders, 1998-1999: 118).

Not only does the CCP have to contend with increased public pressure from below to defend the nation's interests vis-à-vis Japan over the ECS disagreements but the government must also remain wary of attempts by political opponents and groups from within to use such disputes to undermine and weaken their power and their standing within the party. The tensions surrounding the ECS in 1978<sup>5</sup> and 1996 arguably provide the most glaring example of this before the resurgence of serious ECS problems in 2003. Noting the 1996 ECS tensions over the Pinnacle Islands for example, Deans indicated that the 1996 frictions provided an insight into policymaking constraints within China with divisions among the Chinese decision-making elite about how to deal with the dispute. It also exhibited the ways in which the East China Sea serves as a type of 'shadow play' through which other conflicts within the Chinese elite are played out (Deans, 2000:122).

Briefly over-viewing the nature of bilateral ties since 1989, it is apparent that the interlinking of popular sentiment and domestic politics has played a more pronounced role in the considerations that both Japanese and Chinese decision-makers must make. In the ECS, this witnessed top-level elites responding to maritime incidents in a more publicly assertive and strident way in order to fend off political opponents or to strengthen their own political standing. These dynamics within the domestic political spheres of the two countries can have adverse destabilising consequences for these disputes. This research and the time period examined provide compelling examples of

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<sup>5</sup> It is not within the scope of this thesis to provide a comprehensive account of the 1978 Pinnacle Islands incident. However, for more information please see the next chapter as well as the chronology in the appendices. Also see Daniel Tretiak 'The Sino-Japanese Treaty of 1978: The Senkaku Incident Prelude' (1978).

this. Given this line of argument, this thesis does not treat the Chinese or Japanese states as monolithic blocks but rather appreciates the various tensions from within these countries that influence and constrain foreign policy outcomes towards issues such as the East China Sea disputes. In examining how domestic politics and popular sentiment are related to domestic politics in each state, the nexus between the two are examined, including the inter-linkage, rather than the exclusive ‘either or’ of both top-down and bottom-up influences, on how approaches to the 2003 to 2008 ECS disputes manifested themselves.

### **A Survey of the Literature**

This section reviews the overarching debates within the published literature written specifically about the East China Sea disputes. Given that the central hypothesis of this research is that negative popular sentiment and animosity between the two states, and domestic political considerations were among the major factors that led to the politicization and amplification of these disputes, it is necessary to review the available ECS related literature in order to denote how this research makes an added contribution. In this regard, the focus is particularly on the years leading up to and including the 2003 to 2008 period. It also shows how factors such as domestic politicking (such as rivalry between political elites in China, and the rise of China as an electoral issue in Japan), negative political sentiment, and history and security related controversies colored and defined the ECS disputes in this period.

Reviewing the published literature, it is apparent that the overarching debates tend to grant differing levels of attention to the following themes. These are: a) the legal and sovereignty-related complexities of the Pinnacle Islands dispute and maritime delimitation in the ECS; b) security and strategic issues in the ECS; c) domestic political factors that have affected approaches to the ECS disputes since the late 1960s; and d) the post-2002 resurgence in the ECS disputes. As might be expected, there is often an overlap in these themes in the various publications with some authors discussing a variety of the above. The available literature also tends to grant an inordinate level of attention to legal, strategic, and empirical details with more needing to be said in particular about the post-2002 frictions and their relationship to popular sentiment and domestic politics. However, all four areas should be reviewed separately.

#### Legal and Sovereignty-related complexities of the ECS disputes

Reviewing the numerous publications that deal specifically with the legal complexities of East China Sea issues, it is apparent that the ambiguity of current international law provides no real solution for the settlement of these issues, and in fact can complicate the peaceful approach to these disputes that both governments aspire to follow. The legal obstacles to forward movement are tackled in detail by Ramos-Mrosovsky who notes that even though commercial interactions across the ECS are vast, the legal stand-off over the islands' status and its relation to maritime delimitation remains a thorn in the side of Sino-Japanese relations and hinders attempts to agree on a final demarcation of EEZs in the East China Sea (Ramos-Mrosovsky, 2008:904).

In this regard, current international law has in fact served to impede a final legal settlement for three key reasons. These are (a) that laws such as UNCLOS work on the basis of a ‘one-size fits all’ that does not make the necessary considerations for an area with a ‘unique political geography’ such as the ECS. For example, the generality of UNCLOS grants ‘otherwise worthless islands with immense economic value’ and maritime jurisdiction for the owner state over a disproportionate area. The next key reason, (b) is that UNCLOS also effectively promotes the display of sovereignty by claimant states and punishes countries that appear to acquiesce in a rival state’s claim to a disputed area, and c) the ambiguity of current international law also encourages states to be extremely selective in choosing aspects of the law which serve their own interests while simultaneously discouraging them from resolving disputes via prescribed third party legal processes (Ramos-Mrosovsky, 2008:906-908).<sup>6</sup>

Alongside these legal difficulties, the inability to accurately predict an outcome if a third party legal route was adopted, and the effect on the domestic legitimacy of a government if an unfavourable outcome was the result also act as disincentives for parties to resolve their disputes through international litigation. This is particularly a factor for the PRC and Japan in the East China Sea where ‘deep-seated historical and cultural antagonisms exacerbate the dispute.’ The depth of feeling amongst the Chinese with regards to sovereignty and territorial integrity, especially when it comes to Japan, means that,

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<sup>6</sup> It should be noted here that the PRC has opted out of third party arbitration in all its disputes with various neighbours, and not just Japan.

amongst other reasons, the CCP leadership shun international litigation on the islands' disputes because the prospect of possibly losing could have dire consequences for the leadership's standing as 'the guardian of China's rights and prestige.' Even if the outcome of an international judgement on ownership of the Pinnacle Islands was positive for China, there is also no guarantee that the Japanese would easily hand over the islands without a fight or a struggle (Ramos-Mrosovsky, 2008:905;907;938).

Valencia also expands on the reasons why the road to a final legal resolution of the ECS disputes is filled with obstacles. The key challenges to a legal resolution, he states, center on three issues. These are: a) using the Pinnacle Islands as a basis for an EEZ; b) agreeing on a 'unified boundary' that incorporates both EEZ and continental shelf stances; and c) ultimately that regardless of a boundary, that joint development in fisheries, minerals, and hydrocarbon resources should proceed (note for example the 1997 Fisheries agreement). Also central are the differing interpretations of what exactly joint development entails where Japan views it as meaning that China will cease any ongoing exploration activities in areas contested by Japan and where the Chinese would share the fruits of explorations within the overlapping area. The Chinese however see it as meaning that they would be left alone to extract resources within their side of the median line but would be open to joint development in the area between the median line and the end of the continental shelf boundary (a disputed area claimed by both Japan and China) (Valencia, 2006:1).

Wei Su points to the early 1990s as the starting point of the deterioration in approaches to the islands issue after the three disputants (Japan, China, and Taiwan) began to intensify

their claims. Wei Su's legal perspective on these disagreements provides a very detailed account of the historical legal background to the islands debate, the key questions pertaining to the validity of each side's claims, and notes the contrasting legal position adopted by China and Japan. Here Wei Su argues that the PRC's 1992 Law of the Territorial Sea and then the 1996 ratification of UNCLOS by both Japan and China laid out in formal terms each side's perceived maritime territory and thus set the framework for the heightened tensions over EEZs, ship movements, and actions and reactions by nationalistic groups in both states (2005:45-47).

#### Security and Strategic Issues in the East China Sea

Alongside the key legal issues that are central to these disputes, in terms of strategy and security, Harrison contends that both states had for the most part successfully avoided clashes over the ECS from 1968 until the mid-1990s. However 'multiplying energy needs' and the discovery of 'promising gas deposits', in the middle of the East China Sea (in the Xihu Trough area), pushed Beijing more assertively towards Japan's unilaterally drawn median line. Noting that three gas fields overlap the median line, Harrison observes how Japanese anxieties over China were exacerbated by the increasing number of surveys for energy resources carried out on the Japanese side of the median line. These surveys were 'sporadic' from 1995 to 1997 but by the late 1990s had risen dramatically with the Japanese demanding a suspension of production and geological data from Beijing amid concerns that the Chinese could be possibly sucking gas surreptitiously from the Japanese side. Beijing has also intentionally been ambiguous about where exactly its claims begin and end, and continues to push the natural prolongation

argument, thus making joint development ‘difficult if not impossible.’ On a positive note however Harrison cites the findings of Masahiro Miyoshi and Keun-Gwan Lee who in their own respective papers stated that ‘China and Japan did give priority to their immediate economic needs when they concluded the Sino-Japanese Fisheries Agreement of November 11, 1997’ (Harrison, 2005:3-4;9).

In a 2005 conference paper, Hsiung sets out to position the ECS disputes in the context of the increased importance and strategic value being attached to maritime areas and their potential resources where international legal guidelines such as UNCLOS provide ‘no panacea for resolving international maritime delimitation disputes.’ Hsiung’s paper argues that the essential elements in these disputes are access to energy resources and ‘the latent competition for sea power dominance in the region.’ He also contends that ‘the mainland-Taiwan rivalry further complicates the PRC-Japan boundary disputes in the East China Sea, only making solutions more difficult’ (Hsiung, 2005:2;5;14).

Liao tries to position the resurgent ECS disputes in the context of wider changes and shifts between the two neighbors. In this regard, Liao seeks to attribute the fundamental cause of the disputes to ‘power politics and political distrust, which are deemed to have played the key role in preventing the two governments from finding a solution’ where ‘the commonly held opinion is that such competition is a prelude to an all out energy struggle between China and Japan in the international arena.’ The forces between this energy competition and the obstacles to a resolution (after eleven rounds of negotiations

in three years since 2004 without result) were political distrust and power politics. Briefly commenting on the influence of historical controversies such as the Yasukuni shrine<sup>7</sup> issue in the ECS disputes, Liao is somewhat dismissive of their impact, noting that once Koizumi left office in 2006 the tensions attached to the history issue subsided but that ‘the deadlock of the (ECS) negotiations remained the same because of the continued political mistrust’ (Liao, 2008:57-8;71).

On the theme of possible conflict, Blanchard dedicates an entire chapter to the question of whether or not the East China Sea disagreements could result in conflict between the two neighbors. Based on his research, Blanchard asserts that militarized conflict over the ECS is unlikely in the short to medium term because China still depends on Japan economically and politically, and because of the deterrent effect of the US-Japan alliance. He is more pessimistic about the long term however because the PRC’s military strength and its interests in the ECS will have increased dramatically, while the dependency on Japan will have lessened. Reviewing China’s behaviour vis-à-vis the East China Sea at different stages in the last thirty years for example, Blanchard’s analysis argues a strong link between the level of aggression displayed by the Chinese, and the political and

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<sup>7</sup> The Yasukuni Shrine is a Shinto shrine in Tokyo that was founded in 1869 during Japan’s Meiji era (1868-1912). The shrine honours and worships the souls of about 2.5 million Japanese who died in Japan’s wars and who are venerated as deities. Controversy surrounds the shrine because enshrined within it are the souls of fourteen convicted Class A war criminals, including the notorious war-time Prime Minister Hideki Tojo. For Japanese nationalists, the shrine is an important symbol of Japanese patriotism. For Japan’s neighbors however, the shrine is viewed as a shrine to Japanese militarism, and as reflective of a Japanese ‘unwillingness’ to apologise for its past. Japan’s relations with neighbors such as China and South Korea experienced a deep freeze as a result of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi’s persistent visits to the shrine during his tenure (2001-06) (*BBC News*, 15/08/2006).

economic context which tempered China's ability or tendency to threaten the use of force (Blanchard, 2006: 212;225).

To date, China and Japan have succeeded in avoiding conflict over the ECS but the persistence of these disputes continues to act as a source of instability between the two. Fravel examines this problem when he focuses in on the islands issue, their strategic value and their geo-political context within the US-Japan-China relationship, their history, and why Japan (identified as the 'defender') and China (identified as the 'challenger') have been able to avoid conflict over the islands. Despite their value, the actual use of force over the ECS islands has not been a hallmark of bilateral approaches over the decades even though displays of resolve to use force, as seen in 1978 by China, have occasionally served to raise tensions. Applying such views more directly to this thesis, in strategic and security terms, the ECS situation is arguably one in which both states are striving to maintain a stable approach to their disputes. Both however are also following strategies in which their own claims are preserved or even strengthened, or at the very least, where the other side will not be allowed to gain the upper hand in terms of claim strength without protest (Fravel, 2010:144-45;149).

Strategic and security interests also provide insights into why both countries have not resolved the disputes but similarly why they have taken care to avoid military confrontation in spite of frictions in the East China Sea. These are noteworthy for this thesis because they outline the desire by both states to maintain stable relations vis-à-vis the East China Sea while simultaneously holding firm to their territorial claims. Reasons

for this scenario of peace and balancing in the ECS include effective deterrence, Japan's *de facto* control of the Pinnacle Islands, the competition for regional leadership between the two states, and the success to date in peacefully managing the ECS problems. Despite the 'fragile' stability created by the above outlined factors, 'the presence of the dispute allows the opportunity for armed conflict to persist, especially if management of the dispute atrophies' (Fravel, 2010:145;150-51;160). Examining those issues that can complicate and stall attempts at dispute management is thus an important objective that deserves to be pursued.

#### Maritime Regimes and Conflict Prevention in the East China Sea

Perhaps the most detailed examination of the various regimes of co-operation over a whole raft of issues in the ECS that exist (and did not exist) between Tokyo and Beijing up to 2003 is provided by Valencia and Amae. Both scholars evaluate the progress made in bilateral conflict prevention agreements such as the 1997 Fisheries agreement (involving joint regulation and fishing zones) and the 2001 prior notification agreement in relation to scientific research activities. They also see the Japan-China axis as imperative in terms of pushing regime building forward not just for the two states but for the East Asian region as a whole where positive progress by the Japanese and the Chinese would compel neighbors such as South Korea and Taiwan to change their behavior accordingly and follow suit. Both also describe the growing significance of maritime boundaries since the 1990s because of their symbolism for national pride and integrity where, during that time, 'the widespread depletion of fishery resources, the expansion of

national fleets, alleged poaching by non-littoral countries, the growing thirst for oil and gas, and intelligence gathering in the East China Sea' began to test the tacit conflict prevention system between coastal states such as Japan and China. This reality, they warn, amid often hostile and fragile relations between countries in Northeast Asia means that maritime disagreements such as those in the East China Sea 'could become the tail that wags the dog of international relations' in the region. Positive approaches to maritime disputes however are complicated by the fact that economic and political issues are predominantly dealt with bilaterally and by the fact that the wider multi-state institutions in that region are relatively weak in comparison with other regions of the world (Valencia and Amae, 2003:189-90;192-94).

Changing developments in the ECS since the 1990s such as those outlined above, when considered alongside the limitations of legal and institutional frameworks in the region thus press the need for both states to go beyond earlier agreements on Fisheries and Scientific Research activities. This is a most urgent need in the areas of military and intelligence-gathering activities in the ECS. As both scholars argue, events such as 2001 USAF EP3 incident over China and the 2001 North Korean spy ship incident have served to emphasize the urgency of an agreement in order to prevent skirmishes and to enhance communications to resolve problems. As a guideline, both scholars cite the 1972 Incidents at Sea Agreement (INCSEA) between the USA and the USSR as a proven method to regulate the interaction of ships and vessels in contested waters. In the East China Sea, this might involve a number of confidence-building measures such as limiting the frequency and size of naval exercises, prohibiting activities and tests in certain areas,

and creating so-called 'peace zones' where no military activity would be allowed (Valencia and Amai, 2003:199;204).

### Domestic Politics and their Influence on Approaches to the ECS

In looking at how domestic politics have influenced approaches to the ECS disputes, it is clear that internal dynamics and influences have resulted in a pattern over the years of symbolic and potentially escalatory gestures used by individuals and groups in both states to emphasize their country's claims, and to promote or protect their image in front of elite competitors and home audiences. In China, public outrage manifesting itself in protests and calls for stronger actions are often the result of high-profile incidents in the ECS. The CCP permits and even publicly supports these protests for legitimacy purposes and as a type of social pressure valve but then tends to quietly clamp down on them before they turn into larger anti-government protests that would affect domestic political stability or before they threaten essential economic ties. Once the tide of initial outrage has retreated, the two governments make more concerted diplomatic efforts to de-escalate a crisis or incident and strive to restore stable relations.

According to Ramos-Mrosovsky, each of the various tense incidents in the ECS since the late 1960s saw each government respond to domestic pressure to maintain their legal claims and also their political legitimacy by engaging in actions that triggered a response from the other side for similar reasons. These arguments on the interplay of domestic politics and disputes over the ECS would suggest that there is an interaction of top level

as well as bottom-up considerations at the domestic political level that Beijing and Tokyo have to contend with in official and public approaches to territorial disputes. Both governments often find themselves trying to cool the fires of nationalism even though this task is becoming increasingly more difficult and even though the nationalist card can prove at times to be a useful card to exploit (Ramos-Mrosovsky, 2008:935-36).

While looking at the ongoing maritime disputes involving Japan and three of its regional neighbors (the PRC, Russia and South Korea), Valencia asserts that these are more than just squabbles over economic resources but have great weight in terms of inter-state relations because the disputed territories involved have become powerful symbols which strongly impact upon nationalist sentiment and domestic politics in all the states involved. Unresolved historical grievances and the politics of national identity are thus seen to be the fundamental barriers to a resolution of these disputes. These have had the negative effect of perpetuating the levels of tensions between the disputants, where as a result of greater openness and democratization in the region, that more than previously, politicians are responding to their publics' demands for the steadfast protection of national territory as they see it, and where political figures and factions exploit disputes such as those in the ECS for their own ends. This has resulted in the creation of an atmosphere that makes such territorial disputes more dangerous than they should be. According to Valencia, popular nationalistic sentiment fed by historical memory and negative perceptions of the other side alongside a belief that considerable hydrocarbon resources exist in the disputed areas, are the principal factors at the center of these disputes (Valencia, 2000:1-2).

The strength of nationalism in each country has also experienced a resurgence since the 1990s and this has seen nationalists within all the disputant states push their own agendas onto the domestic political agenda with sometimes negative consequences for foreign policy (Valencia, 2000:4). Downs and Saunders for example examine the delicate balance between economic performance, nationalist pride, and legitimacy that top elites in the CCP had to find during the 1990s when disputes over the Pinnacles Islands arose. This balance often sees the CCP target its nationalist rhetoric on the Pinnacle Islands at a domestic audience for the purposes of regime legitimacy (Downs and Saunders, 1998-1999:116-117;123) while balancing this against China's need for stable economic relations with Japan.

This concern for domestic stability and legitimacy runs alongside domestic constituencies and public sentiment which are increasingly influential considerations, even in a non-democratic state like the PRC. The political use of nationalistic issues by central government in the post-reform era is likewise tied to the need by China's conservatives to use issues such as the Spratly Islands and the Pinnacle Islands to reassert their power and influence (Valencia, 2000:5). By examining the 1996 frictions over the Pinnacle Islands, Deans illustrated the divisions within the Chinese leadership in terms of how the disputes should be dealt with and how the East China Sea serves as a type of 'shadow play' for other contests within the CCP elite. Such views suggest that the main factors driving the disputes are not state-sponsored nationalism nor the governments themselves but the

ways in which domestic groups in Japan have used them to embarrass and pressure the government, or for their own political ends. In the PRC, the disputes are often driven by the ECS being often used as a card through which elites compete for power (Deans, 2000:119;122).

### The post-2002 resurgence in the ECS disputes

In terms of the oil and gas element of the recent post-2002 ECS disputes, Drifte's two 2008 working papers arguably provide the most detailed account of the developments that led to the resurgence of these disagreements after 2002. The first paper outlines in impressive step-by-step detail the developments in the ECS that culminated in the 2003 decision by Beijing to commence exploration activities at the controversial *Chunxiao* field and then Tokyo's later decision in mid-2005 to revive once dormant exploration rights, allowing Japanese companies to explore for oil and gas in once off-limits areas of the ECS. The first paper likewise touches upon shifts and changes within the wider relationship that impacted upon how both governments approached the disputed sea. Examples given by Drifte include the effect of nationalist politicians 'riding high in Japan', 'tit-for-tat reactions', and tensions being 'fanned by a general deterioration of the bilateral relationship (as a result of China's military developments, (and) the Japanese reaction being to enhance its security links with the US).' Japan's defense changes were in turn seen as an attempted containment of China with 'the history conflict, rising nationalism, and assertiveness on both sides, and growing political and economic competition between the two countries contributing to the rising tensions.' Other reasons

for the downturn in approaches to the ECS cited by Drifte, include the increased number of Chinese scientific research and naval vessels inside Japan's EEZ, and the growing media interest toward, and suspicion of, the PRC amid more public scrutiny of China in Japan from both left and right-wing elements. In China, a 'growing pluralism and loosening of central control' hampered Beijing's ability to deal with the disputes in a more favorable way (Drifte, 2008b:5;9;11;22;27).

The second of the Drifte papers also addresses in detail the historical, legal and technical aspects of the ECS disputes, for example the median line issue and the Pinnacle Islands issue and how they are inter-related. Drifte also presents some interesting points on the perception of actions. A notable example includes the view that Japan's passivity towards Chinese developments in the ECS up to 2003 must have been seen by Beijing as an acceptance of Chinese actions as long as these actions did not take place beyond the unilaterally proposed median line. The paper similarly comments on the importance of political good will if negotiations are going to result in a positive conclusion. Drifte for example notes how nationalistic pressure groups in both states 'pushed for a greater assertion of their country's stance' thus 'adding to the pressure arising from China's relentless exploration and the worrying military connotations of the territorial disputes' (Drifte, 2008a:2;13).

The second paper stands out from the first in particular because of its evaluation of the landmark June 2008 'principled consensus' between Tokyo and Beijing where Drifte

asserts that its significance lies in its symbolism of improved bilateral ties rather than its substance. As with the first paper, it briefly discusses the domestic political changes that contributed to a more negative approach to these disputes leading up to 2003 such as bureaucratic shifts in power (for example from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) to the Ministry of Economics, Trade and Industry (METI) in Japan) and the issue becoming ‘hijacked’ by a wider deterioration in bilateral ties. Noteworthy also is Drifte’s argument that the June 2008 agreement witnessed a tacit acknowledgement of the median line by the Chinese and that the escalation of the disputes after 2002 were ‘not entirely China’s fault since both states have gone ahead at various times with exploration activities without the prior consent of the other side’ (Drifte, 2008a:2;13;17-18;20).

Valencia reviews the post-2002 situation in the ECS and places a special emphasis on the legalistic complexities of the ECS disagreements and possible ways out of the disputes impasse. He focuses in particular on the worst phase of the ECS disputes in 2005 and observes that it developed in the context of increased security concerns over the PRC’s activities in maritime areas, especially the intrusion of a Chinese submarine in November 2004 and also numerous PRC exploration ships in what Japan considers to be Japanese waters in previous months. Despite these challenges however, Valencia contends that conflict is not an inevitable fact of life. A number of factors point to the Japanese and the Chinese striving to find ways to lessen the danger of trouble or the use of force. The most prominent reason for this is that ‘a positive China-Japan relationship is simply too important to be destroyed by these disputes’ and that this realization may be ‘the catalyst necessary for wise leaders to forge at least a temporary solution.’ Valencia similarly notes

that the exponential increase in bilateral trade as well as growing pressure to proceed with oil and gas extraction in the area may further motivate leaders and interest groups to find a compromise (Valencia, 2007:127). Despite this, Valencia also sees however that domestic politics in both states are still central to how Japan and China approach these disputes, and where the alternative to positive political relations has witnessed ‘continued mutual suspicion, unstable relations, unmanaged and undeveloped resources, and an increasing frequency and intensity of incidents, fueling nationalist sentiments and resultant political conflict’ (Valencia, 2006:2).

Cai also looks at the post-2002 energy and demarcation disputes and the question of why they have attracted attention in recent years. Divided into three sections, the first examines the post-2002 situation and negotiations regarding the ECS, and also Tokyo and Beijing’s standpoint and claims in the area. The second section assesses the proposals for, and possibilities of, joint-development in the ECS and then the final section discusses the implications of the disputes for regional security. Writing in 2007, Cai observed a positive development in terms of some progress being made towards an ‘accident-preventative initiative’ and joint-development plans. He also outlines four key elements of the disputes that directly relate to security implications where domestic politics are one aspect because of their strong influence on the formulation of maritime policy. In this regard, Cai argues that because both governments have already laid down sometimes assertive statements on the ECS, shifting from earlier remarks may make it ‘embarrassing’ and politically costly in terms of ‘domestic partisan politics’ and public reaction. Assessing the chances of a resolution, Cai contends that each side is unlikely to

make any major concessions in terms of territory. Despite this however he contends that the use of force is unlikely and that Japan and China can find ways to co-operate so as to ensure stability. He nonetheless warns that without positive signals and the required political will, and without consequent co-operative agreements in the near future, then the security situation in the ECS, fed by ‘energy-related tensions’, will not improve. Reflecting wider Chinese perspectives on Japan, Cai observes the problems caused by the growing strength of both states’ navies where ‘in particular, the Japanese navy has been changing its strategy from defending national territorial integrity to engaging in international operations’ and where Japan has, through ‘unilateral actions’ used the coming into force of the UNCLOS in 1994 to ‘expand its maritime boundaries.’ These occurred, he argues, alongside ‘provocative actions’ by Japan with Korea over the Liancourt islets (*Dokdo* in Korean and *Takeshima* in Japanese) and ‘disturbing acts’ by the Japanese with regards to the Pinnacle Islands (Cai, 2007:57-59;64;67;69).

Of all the available literature that deals specifically with the post-2002 East China Sea disputes, Manicom’s 2008 article arguably comes closest in terms of examining how ideational and domestic political factors affect approaches to, and bilateral understandings of, the ECS disagreements. Manicom argues the case for equal respect to the material and ideational aspects of these disputes where both are seen as ‘the primary driving forces’ because ‘compromise on the material aspects of the dispute has become beholden to nationalist prerogatives.’ Viewing the adoption of one aspect over the other as an over-simplification, Manicom cautions scholars not to examine the material and ideational elements ‘in isolation from each other.’ His article also dedicates

comparatively greater attention to how domestic influences relate to these disputes. In this regard, the relevant decision-making groups (core, peripheral, popular nationalist groups) in China and Japan are outlined and the history of the disputes up until 2003 is explained. The inter-relationship between nationalist expression in both states is similarly discussed where Manicom contends that the resurgent ECS tensions since 2003 owe a great deal to the inclusion of now more significant material factors (i.e. offshore hydrocarbon resources, sea-lane security, responding to greater assertiveness in maritime areas by the other side etc.) alongside ideational aspects in these disputes. These, he argues, ‘broadened the scope’ of the ECS disputes beyond what was once an issue centered almost exclusively around the Pinnacle Islands dispute. The nadir of the 2003 to 2006 disputes from April to September 2005 then were ‘the product of a weaving of ideational and material factors’ where this inter-linking was first illustrated in July 1996 when Japanese nationalists responded to Beijing’s EEZ declaration of the same year by erecting a lighthouse on one of the Pinnacle Islands. For these reasons, Manicom asserts that the unlikelihood of finding a compromise can be attributed not solely to the ‘domestic nationalist pressure vis-à-vis the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands’ or to ‘rising energy needs in China and Japan’ but rather to ‘the marriage of these two aspects of the dispute’ (Manicom, 2008b:375-76;382;385;390).

### Summary of Literature

Reviewing the available literature, the call for an examination of the 2003 to 2008 disputes from an actor-centered constructivist liberal angle is strengthened by the fact that

the literature to date tends to focus exclusively on a limited number of journal articles and papers that focus heavily on the empirical, strategic, and legalistic aspects that directly caused these disputes, and on a history of key developments and incidents relating to the disagreements since the late 1960s. In the majority of these sources, while providing useful factual information for foreign policy analysts, the influence of domestic politics and popular sentiment in the period from 2003 to 2008 is often only touched upon with more deserving to be said. It will be shown in this thesis how important it is not to overlook the ‘inside-out’ actor-centered constructivist liberal component in these 2003 to 2008 disputes and how it complements and adds to possible alternative perspectives on why the disputes re-ignited to the extent they did after 2002. The actor-centered constructivist liberal approach taken to explaining the amplification of the ECS disputes in the period from 2003 to 2008 is thus new ground in terms of its contribution to the existing literature.

### **Articulation of the Research Question**

While all of the four major contexts discussed earlier play a prominent role in understanding the resurgence of these disputes, this thesis emphasizes the fourth major element, domestic politics and popular sentiment, and how these factors affected and constrained approaches to the ECS from 2003 to 2008. To be more precise, this research contends that negative popular sentiment fed by history, national identity, and security

related issues and controversies, and domestic political considerations such as electoral strategizing in Japan and competition between top-level elites and constituencies and their challengers in the PRC were among the major factors that contributed to the amplification and politicization of these disputes. From this perspective, it is argued that the extent of the post-2002 East China Sea tensions over the islands and the sea's delimitation are best understood by emphasizing their symbolism and the instrumental utility of these issues for domestic politics in both countries. This links into explaining why these disputes are often both potentially combustible and powerful, in that they are able to stir up a nationalistic public reaction that is disproportionate to the actual material gains to be made in the ECS (Roy, 2003:3).

This problem of popular sentiment and domestic politicking and their influence on the ECS disputes is an ongoing problem that can cause bilateral approaches to the disputes to wax and wane. This is particularly the case in the PRC and goes a long way in explaining the reasons why Chinese reactions to publicized incidents in the ECS can be so dramatic and emotive. These domestic factors arguably do more to explain the high level of tensions over East China Sea incidents rather than explanations that prioritize the competition for natural resources or 'state-sponsored nationalist irredentism' (Deans, 2000:128). The reality so far is that moderates in Tokyo and Beijing have striven to focus on the mutual benefits for the wider relationship and to quietly deal with ECS disagreements where possible but have, at times, reacted more assertively and vociferously to defend their state's legal claim. These forceful responses are arguably a result of political posturing and pressures from a raft of actors at home ranging from

political opponents and challengers, to political factions to enraged nationalist groups and citizens. In the case of China in particular, the desire of top-decision-makers to maintain their nationalist credentials amid pressures from within the elite have resulted in quite forceful and sometimes aggressive responses over the years to incidents in the ECS (Deans, 2000:119-120; 128-129).

This is not to suggest that domestic politics and popular sentiment are new features that influence how the Japanese and Chinese perceived and tackled their 2003 to 2008 maritime disagreements. Indeed, the chronological history of these disputes since the late 1960s when they first awoke contains numerous examples of where these factors troubled and complicated bilateral approaches. The greatest difference however between earlier high profile stand-offs surrounding the ECS (for example in 1978 and 1996) and their more recent resurgence after 2002 was: a) the inclusion of the lingering post-1996 maritime delimitation issue in the disputes; b) the greater plurality in the PRC since the 1990s and the much more influential role of increasingly anti-Japanese nationalism for regime legitimatization in China; and c) unprecedented levels of public and elite fear surrounding the rise of China in Japan and the resurgence of new nationalism in Japan as a card exploited by Japanese groups and politicians for their own political purposes that came at the end of a decade of economic and political malaise in Japan.

While the economic and nationalist pillars of legitimacy, along with elite competition, in the PRC provide telling insights into approaches to the ECS from 2003 to 2008, it is also

important to examine how popular sentiment and political posturing in Japan impacted upon the post-2002 East China Sea disputes. Approaching the 2003 to 2008 East China Sea disputes from an actor-centred constructivist liberal perspective provides a useful viewpoint in which to examine how the actual and potential exploitation of popular sentiment over issues such as the ECS for domestic political purposes by various individuals, constituencies, and groups in both countries constrained approaches to these maritime disagreements.

### Why the East China Sea Disputes Matter

An examination into the bilateral approaches taken to the ECS disagreements from 2003 to 2008 provides important insights into how China and Japan deal with each other over conflicting issues of strategic and territorial importance. As two states who are dealing with similar levels of power for the first time ever, the resurgent post-2002 ECS disputes represent uncharted waters in a new era for two neighbors historically accustomed to an asymmetrical relationship. As Drifte argues, a case study analysis of the ECS territorial disputes also shows how Japan has changed its once passive behavior vis-à-vis the PRC in the East China Sea and how the Japanese are ‘attempting to balance a much more assertive approach with the relative decline of its power in relation to China.’ Analyzing the Chinese side, the re-awakening of these disputes also illustrates ‘a move away from a very centralised control of the disputes to a decision-making process where public opinion, individual ministries, oil companies, and particularly the navy are increasing more influence’ (Drifte, 2008a:19-20).

The approaches taken to these disputes have repercussions not just for Japan and China but for the whole region and its security, where the intensity of territorial disputes over maritime territory and energy reserves have increased considerably since the 1990s. Notable alternative examples include disputes between the PRC and her neighbours over the Spratly and Paracel Islands in the South China Sea, between Japan and China over the *Okinotorishima* atoll, and between Japan and South Korea over the Liancourt islets (*Dokdo* in Korean and *Takeshima* in Japanese). Indeed, these numerous other territorial disagreements involving either Japan or China may provide another reason as to why concessions in the ECS have been such a difficult challenge in that if granted could complicate claims and disputes elsewhere (Austin and Harris, 2001:104).

This research is relevant in this regard because a workable and constructive approach by East Asia's two most powerful states to the East China Sea disputes has a potential positive spill-over effect for the East Asian region by setting a framework for the resolution, or at least stabilizing, of complicated and sensitive territorial disputes. This is echoed by Drifte who asserts that 'the management of the Japanese-Chinese relationship has huge implications for the process of accommodating China's rise as a political, economic and military power, and this process will exert great influence on regional as well as international stability' where bilateral approaches to the ECS problems will have ramifications for other similar disputes involving China, most notably in the South China Sea. The ECS' strategic position also implies that approaches to these disputes have a

bearing on how Beijing might deal with a Taiwan contingency.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the pursuit of oil and gas deposits in their shared sea can provide a greater comprehension of the limits and potential of economic interest-based approaches that might guide China as it seeks to promote itself as a peace-loving regional and global power (Drifte, 2008b:1).

The seriousness with which the ECS talks have been addressed over the years also shows that regardless of the actuality of the oil and gas reserves in sea areas such as those in close proximity to the Pinnacle Islands, the islands' ownership issue and the control of sea areas so close to both states have a significant bearing on long-term security concerns and the potential altering of the boundaries of each state's maritime territory (Hsiung, 2005: 11). As one journalist argued in 2006, these disagreements aren't just a wrangle over territory or indeed scarce natural resources, but are one part of a much larger jigsaw puzzle of problems. At the frontline of these encounters at sea lies the question of how to prevent potential conflict between the rising naval aspirations of Beijing and the tightly linked forces of Japan and its ally the United States (Caryl, 2006). In relation to the Pinnacle Islands disputes, Fravel notes their importance where 'even in the absence of armed conflict over the land being disputed, tensions over the Senkaku Islands are likely to limit co-operation in other ways, highlighting mutual concerns about long-term intentions and ambitions' (Fravel, 2010:144).

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<sup>8</sup> It is not within the scope of this thesis to discuss domestic, ideational and security factors regarding Taiwan's approach to the post-2002 ECS disputes.

The need for an examination of the possible reasons why these disputes re-surfaced and became so tense after 2002 is further strengthened by the significance of the ECS for Beijing from a strategic point of view. When viewing a map highlighting the EEZs of states that surround China in the East China Sea, one can see the security impact caused by what Beijing views as ‘sea denial’ posed by neighboring states such as Japan and South Korea in terms of China’s unrestricted access to the open seas. Despite the fact that mainland China possesses a coastline of roughly 18,000 kilometers in length, in the ECS, China’s exits to the open sea almost exclusively run into maritime territory ‘controlled’ by Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and North Korea. The maritime areas claimed by Japan, which from the Chinese stand-point far exceeds what is allowed under UNCLOS, not only denies China access to much of the seabed’s essential oil and gas deposits of which China claims sovereign rights to under the same law, it also places the Chinese motherland in a more vulnerable security position (Hsiung, 2005: 4-5).

Despite the apparent material and strategic value of the Pinnacle Islands and untapped resources in the East China Sea, both states have tended to successfully manage these disputes while holding firm to their claims and taking measures to check and balance against the activities of the other side. An examination of the ECS disputes in the period from 2003 to 2008 can exhibit the challenges to this normally peaceful management that domestic politics and popular sentiment can have on these disagreements. The frictions surrounding the Pinnacle Islands and maritime delimitation also provide an insightful opportunity to compare the manifestations of nationalism in the North-east Asian region since the turn of the new century (Deans, 2000:120). In this regard, it is apparent that

politicians and political factions in both states exploiting sensitive ideational issues in conjunction with territorial disputes for their own purposes is a significant escalatory variable.

### Outline of Chapters

Following on from Chapter One, Chapter Two addresses the theoretical underpinnings of this work before moving on to a discussion of the applied research methods. More specifically, it discusses and reviews alternative international relations theories and then debates the benefits of an actor-centered constructivist liberal approach. The latter half of Chapter Two outlines the research design of the thesis incorporating issues such as the method of inquiry, interview and non-interview data, interview method and interviewees, as well as discussing the thesis' research constraints and limitations. The applicability of this methodology to an actor-centered constructivist liberal approach is also argued. Chapter Three presents in greater detail the ways in which domestic political considerations and popular sentiment in Japan and China in the years leading up to 2003 contributed to the flammable and volatile atmosphere surrounding the East China Sea frictions after August 2003. It also discusses how the ECS disputes were managed over the decades since they surfaced as a bilateral issue in the late 1960s. This also includes a description of the political and institutional context within which foreign policy is made in each state and outlines the important actors, players and domestic considerations in both systems that influence how incidents and bilateral approaches relating to the East China Sea manifest themselves.

Chapter Four examines in closer detail the August 2003 to June 2008 period and the effect of domestic politics, popular sentiment, and various actors and incidents on approaches to the resurgent East China Sea disagreements. The focus is primarily on the sequence of internal events and developments that greatly contributed to the politicization and amplification of these disputes in the 2003 to 2008 period. The two major sections of the chapter deal with a) 2003 to 2006 – when the disputes broke out, peaked and then calmed down and b) 2006 to 2008 – when a noticeable improvement in approaches to the disputes resulted in the best bilateral relations in years and the signing of a symbolic agreement on the East China Sea in June 2008. Each of the chapter's two main sections on China and Japan conclude with a survey of personal views from elites (from the interview list) in the two countries.

The thesis' concluding Chapter Five provides a brief summary of the thesis, reminds the reader of its purpose and methodology, and points out its most important findings. It also provides an update on ECS related events since 2008 and discusses possible policy implications and some opportunities for future research. This research's conclusion also addresses the question as to how China and Japan might deal with their immediate concerns regarding conflict prevention in the ECS, domestic political constraints, ideational-related controversies, a weak institutional framework, and how to accommodate one another's energy and territorial concerns.

## **Chapter 2 – Theoretical Perspectives**

### Introduction

This chapter sets out to review alternative international relations theories and then discusses an actor-centered constructivist liberal approach to understanding the frictions surrounding the East China Sea disputes from August 19<sup>th</sup> 2003 to June 18<sup>th</sup> 2008. This theoretical approach is arguably the most effective in illustrating how domestic political considerations such as regime legitimacy and competition between top-level elites and constituencies in China along with electoral strategizing in the case of Japan, when viewed alongside negative popular sentiment were among the major factors that contributed to the amplification and politicization of these disputes. Given the lack of declared theoretical approaches to understanding these specific disputes in the 2003 to 2008 time frame, the door remains wide open for how one might approach these disputes theoretically and conceptually.

In theoretical terms, this thesis aims to illuminate aspects of these maritime disputes which do not receive enough in-depth attention under other theoretical approaches such as realism. However, the intention here is not to supplant other possible theoretical explanations but rather to add to them. It thus seeks to present another angle to the various understandings and explanations for the escalation of tensions over the ECS where the state-centric angle for example, while noteworthy and important, does not

address in sufficient detail the effect of sub-national political and ideational considerations on worsening bilateral approaches to these disputes. It aims to show that there is a very significant and often over-looked third component to understanding the resurgence of these disputes after 2002.

### **Trying on Realism**

In analyzing the ECS disputes from 2003 to 2008, many people, looking from the outside, would naturally be tempted to apply a realist explanation with its prioritizing of the international system in which states exist, relative power, security, and material capabilities and resources. The East China Sea disagreements after 2002 can seem primarily like a dispute best understood by examining the external state versus state level of relations. Defensive structural realism or defensive neo-realism, for example, is certainly applicable and has merit in explaining some of the most important material and strategic components of the 2003 to 2006 frictions but it also leaves a gap and has limitations in illustrating in depth the sub-national, social and non-material dimensions of these disagreements and why as a result of these factors, the disputes became so tense, amplified, and dramatically politicized.

### **Defining Realism**

Legro and Moravcsik outline a distinct feature of realist assumptions in that realists contend that ‘state preferences are fixed and uniformly conflictual’ where relations

between states are seen as an ongoing game played over the distribution and redistribution of sought after resources. For realists the control of, and the extent of material resources and capabilities are a defining characteristic which distinguishes realism from other schools such as liberalism (Legro and Moravcsik, 1999:12-18).

Generally speaking, realism divides into two main camps, classical realism with its emphasis on the imperfections of human nature, and structural realism or neo-realism which argues that the anarchic international system is to blame for inter-state rivalry and conflict (Hobson, 2000). Within the structural or neo-realist camp, significant differences exist between the offensive and defensive structural realist schools. Defensive realists argue that structural realities place limitations on how much power a state can realistically achieve. This serves to lessen security competition between states. Offensive realism however is not so sanguine. Offensive realists argue that the structure of the international system gives incentives for states to maximize their power vis-à-vis other states and even seek hegemony. This results in inevitable inter-state friction. Both these strands of state-centric structural realism (neo-realism) see states as being deeply concerned about the balance of power and competing with each other to achieve power at the expense of other states or at the very least ensure that they do not lose power. States behave according to these tenets because the international system's structure is such that to do otherwise could undermine a state's ability to survive (Mearsheimer, 2007: 71). Realists also tend to view internal and cultural considerations as, at best, secondary issues. The structure of the international system is thus seen as the main obstacle to co-operation and the main determinant in the character of inter-state relations. Future

uncertainty is another crucial aspect of inter-state relations that realists emphasize in their attempts to explain balancing by, and a lack of co-operation between, states (Copeland, 2000:200).

### Realism and the 2003 to 2008 ECS Disputes

Defensive neo-realist contentions about balancing, structural constraints on offensive behavior, relative versus absolute gains, and how these factors both limit and complicate security competition arguably supply observers with very telling insights into understanding the security and strategic behavior of both China and Japan in the contested East China Sea. The constraints on sustained offensive or expansive behavior by either Japan or China suggest defensive realism's suitability to understanding security and strategic behaviour in the ECS by Beijing and Tokyo.

### *Strategic and Security Behavior in the ECS*

From the realist perspective, as observed by McCarthy, the fact that China and Japan suffered their worst post-normalization (1972) political relations in the early years of the twenty-first century is not surprising. Both countries are after all two of the world's most powerful military and economic states and the largest such states in Asia. The history of the relationship has also often been marred by adversarial behavior. For realists therefore, it makes sense from a power politics viewpoint that these two rivals would behave in ways that maximize or at least balance their power capabilities (McCarthy, 2008: 4).

This behavior is evident in volatile and uncertain areas such as the East China Sea. Indeed such is the strategic importance of the ECS and the uncertainty surrounding it that the possibility of a military skirmish cannot be completely ruled out. Complicating this is the fact that the depth of communications between the militaries in the PRC, Japan and the US is still relatively poor especially when it comes to judging intent and when it comes to the deployment of both air and naval forces (Valencia, 2007: 129-130). Unlike other similar disputes in less uncertain circumstances that have been bilaterally resolved (for example the 1978 Torres Strait agreement between Australia and Papua New Guinea, and the 1984 Gulf of Maine agreement between Canada and the USA), the ECS disputes are characterized by lingering uncertainty and instability surrounding the future relationship between the disputant states (Dutton, 2007:52-55).

In the case of the post-2002 East China Sea disagreements, defensive neo-realism arguably outlines to observers the reasons why these disputes are not just a case of loud bickering between Beijing and Tokyo but are an issue where both governments attach strategic and material value to this sea, and why they cautiously observe the behavior of the other side, particularly in areas in close proximity to the Pinnacle Islands and the median line. Appreciating the geo-strategic value of the Pinnacle Islands for Japan and China for example, Suganuma states:

*‘Since the Diaoyu Islands are located only 120 miles northeast of Taiwan and 250 miles east of mainland China, they constitute a potential strategic base from which a hostile power might threaten China. Indeed, Japanese*

*military bases on the Diaoyu Islands could mean Japanese guns under China's nose'* (Suganuma, 2000:11).

In line with defensive neo-realist assumptions, it is evident, that the two core objectives for Tokyo and Beijing vis-à-vis the Pinnacle Islands for example are stability and keeping a watchful eye on any attempt by the other side to change the status quo in terms of territorial possession or strengthening their claim. For the most part, both governments have also taken important behind the scenes steps to de-escalate tensions and to heed off potential trouble (see the chronology for examples).

That being said, while there is a tendency in some quarters in both states to be alarmist about the behavior of the other side in the East China Sea, the reasons for concern are arguably not always unwarranted. For example, the evidence since the late 1990s would point to a China that has increased the number of PRC warships and advance survey vessels test-drilling and exploring for resources in disputed waters in order to stress its claims. This trend has, to the consternation of Japanese defense planners, gone in tandem with the strengthening of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) and China's double-digit military spending (Ramos-Mrosovsky, 2008:921). Since the turn of the new century, the Japanese have witnessed a more concerted effort by the Chinese to emphasize their claims and to increase their maritime presence in parts of the East China Sea, South China Sea<sup>9</sup> and elsewhere.

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<sup>9</sup> It is not within the scope of this thesis to engage in an in-depth discussion of the South China Sea disputes. For a concise account, see 'Q&A: South China Sea dispute' (*BBC News*, 19/07/2011). For an

Japanese defence analysts had long been used to occasional incursions into what they consider to be Japanese waters once or twice a year by Chinese vessels. However, by the year 2000 for example, these had risen dramatically to thirty-one. The objective of such intrusions included a PLAN intelligence gathering ship carrying out a mapping of the seabed aimed at improving the navigational capabilities of Chinese submarines (Mohan, 2000). Such behavior would suggest that the Chinese have been attempting to chart the seabed while gauging the likely reaction and capabilities of US and Japanese naval vessels in the ECS (Valencia, 2007: 129). From the Japanese perspective, these changes alongside the impressive advancement in the PRC's air and naval capabilities means that the Chinese are increasingly collecting the means in which to possibly strangle some of Japan's most important shipping lanes (Self, 2002:86).

Despite this more assertive behaviour by the PRC since the late 1990s, it has not, according to Blanchard, 'pursued its interests with reckless abandon' even though its ability to defend its interests has improved. For example, on the numerous occasions that Japanese politicians and nationalists have landed on the Pinnacle Islands since the 1990s, the Chinese made no military efforts to prevent such landings even though, under the Chinese interpretation of the ambiguous UNCLOS, they could have done so. Some may contend that this inaction can be explained by the deterrent effect of the combined power of the US-Japan alliance. In this regard however, Blanchard asserts that it would be 'far-

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account of fishing boats being used to assert the PRC's claims, and of the harassment of US naval vessels in the South China Sea and the Yellow Sea, see Bussert (2011). Also see Thompson (2009).

fetched' to believe that it is solely this balance of power consideration that determines Chinese behaviour in the East China Sea (Blanchard, 2006: 224-225).

In spite of such evidence of restraint from the two countries, both the Japanese and the Chinese have contributed to a riskier scenario in maritime areas by pursuing a strategy of strengthening their naval capabilities in order to enhance their ability to control contested waters (Pan, 2009:152). In response to China's military build up and increased presence in maritime areas, Japan has, since the 1990s, enhanced its alliance with the US with a special emphasis on its naval capabilities. Japan's defense budget in late 2005 for example, when bilateral relations were at their worst in years, incorporated the acquisition of twenty-one new ships, seven new fighter jets and a reconditioned fleet, all to the tune of some fifty billion yen to be spread out over the course of six years between 2006 and 2012. A Coast Guard spokesperson at the time made no bones about the reasons for one of the key motivations for these upgrades when he stated that they were due in no small part to 'mounting concerns in the East China Sea area, especially near the disputed gas field' (Samuels, 2007: 169). The future outcome of this strategic balancing behaviour by both Japan and China remains to be seen but it has already contributed to a far riskier military scenario between Chinese and Japanese vessels in the ECS where traditional reticence to use force or to physically assert claims has been replaced by greater willingness to defend claims and higher levels of insecurity felt on both sides.

*Realism and the Economic and Material Value of the ECS*

Alongside the apparent security and strategic interests that Japan and China have in the ECS, the economic and material value of the East China Sea have also caused both states to behave in ways presumed by defensive neo-realists to protect and utilize these interests while simultaneously trying, where possible, not to allow the defense of these interests to seriously trouble the wider and more important political and economic relationship. Despite the challenges experienced in the relationship since the 1990s, both recognize that the gains to be made from wider political and economic stability and co-operation are simply too important to be jeopardized by issues such as the East China Sea disputes. China is the top destination for Japanese exports and the most important source of Japan's imports. At the onset of the 2003 to 2006 disputes for example, bilateral trade stood at a record 132 billion dollars (*Strait Times*, 14/08/2004), rising to an expected 150 billion dollars in 2004 (Roy, 2005:205).

Even though these wider more important benefits are considered, this thesis nonetheless appreciates the material and economic value of the ECS for decision-making elites. As Hsiung points out, the East China Sea, particularly the central *Xihu* Trough area that straddles the median line, is possibly the planet's last remaining richest unexploited repository of oil and natural gas (Hsiung, 2005:5). Using the known geological facts as evidence, Chinese petroleum experts also hold the opinion that promising reserves potentially lie on the eastern side of the continental shelf with an emphasis on the Okinawa Trough claimed by Japan (Harrison, 2004:7).

The existence of ECS oil and gas deposits in the 1990s resulted in a number of Japanese politicians and writers stating that the relatively recent Chinese claims in the East China Sea are overwhelmingly motivated by China's insatiable desire for energy reserves rather than irredentism (Suganuma, 2000:12).<sup>10</sup> Such irritation was matched by a belief that the Chinese only resurrected the islands' issue for example after a hiatus of some fifteen years (since the late 1970s until 1992) as an insincere ploy aimed at accessing resources in the ECS. The 1990s also saw numerous Japanese elites concluding that Beijing's claims to the Pinnacle Islands were also related to its blue water naval ambitions. The Chinese for their part expressed a sense of frustration that Japan seemingly did not protest the PRC's exploration activities until resources were found in fields such as *Chunxiao*. As a result, Chinese decision-makers felt compelled to balance against any attempt by Japanese energy companies to encroach, as the Chinese saw it, upon the PRC's continental shelf.

Given these energy concerns, the appeal of potentially large hydrocarbon resources in the East China Sea is apparent. It is not surprising then to see policy makers and business groups clamoring to at least protect these resources from the other side. The conundrum however for cool-headed and rational policy-makers in Beijing and Tokyo is how best and how most efficiently to realistically access and utilize these much sought after goods without falling into a confrontation with the other side. They must also find the right

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<sup>10</sup> For an interesting insight into such views regarding the economic and geo-strategic value of the ECS islands and resources, see Suganuma, 2000:11-18.

balance between their various interests at home and in the ECS without compromising in a bilateral agreement to such an extent that their domestic political position would be weakened or their state would be in a more vulnerable position in terms of its security and resources than before such an agreement.

Another complicating factor is the fact that there are significant challenges and limitations in terms of accessing resources in the disputed areas. The October 2004 decision of major international oil companies, Unocal and Royal-Dutch Shell to withdraw from a joint agreement (drafted in August 2003) with two Chinese companies to extract gas from the ECS on the grounds that the venture was not commercially viable seemed to exemplify views that the accessible resources in mid-sea areas like the *Xihu* Trough are possibly not as substantive as people might imagine. This is a moot point, given the argument that fears over potential Sino-Japanese confrontations in the area, played a contributory role in the companies' decision (Zha, 2008).

In potential resource exploration areas near the Pinnacle Islands, the topographical challenges posed to companies have acted as an added disincentive. Downs and Saunders for example, writing in the late 1990s, noted that foreign oil companies have been reluctant to drill for oil near the islands because of the political uncertainty involved, the difficult terrain in the area, the apparent presence of unexploded ordnance from when the islands were used by the US as a target range in the 1950s and 1960s, and lingering doubts about the commercial viability of reserves near the islands (Downs and Saunders,

1998-1999: 124). Tackling the notion that other areas of the East China Sea such as the *Chunxiao* field possess a large amount of oil and gas resources, Tsutomu Toichi, a senior managing director at the Institute of Energy Economics (IEEJ) in Tokyo, airs his own views, and those shared by some of his Chinese acquaintances, when stating that the said resources are not as extensive as both states would hope. The resources in waters close by are nonetheless significant, he claims, because Japan is so dependent on overseas energy supplies. The ECS resources however are not a simple matter of China, and particularly Japan, extracting them as they please, even within areas far from the controversial median line. For example, even if China were willing to permit Japanese companies to extract resources within what the Japanese consider to be Japan's EEZ on the eastern continental shelf, the Japanese would still require Chinese assistance to access resources in a cost-effective and financially prudent manner. The transportation of oil is not so much a problem but access to gas would require a pipeline in which to transport it. A Japan-bound pipe-line solution for example would pose serious technical challenges due to the topography of the seabed beyond the continental shelf (Tsutomu Toichi, 29/08/2006).

### *Realism's Strengths and Weaknesses*

Having overviewed the strategic, economic and material value of the ECS, defensive neo-realism's emphasis on structural power, relative gains, balancing, and capabilities offers an attractive set of assumptions that seem to fit comfortably alongside Japan and China's behavior in terms of strategic and military issues in the East China Sea. With regards to

the military and strategic dimension, evidence exists to show that both states are attempting to balance each other and taking measures to prevent or at least loudly protest whenever one side is seen to be strengthening its claims in areas like the Pinnacle Islands or in and around oil and gas fields near the median line.

In economic terms, the reasons or potential reasons why Japan and China are eager to protect the possible energy resources in the ECS are clear and obvious. It is evident however that for Tokyo and Beijing to receive maximum utility from the ECS resources, they will more than likely require a bilaterally agreed compromise leading to joint development of some sort in order to exploit the full potential of the available resources. Defensive realist contentions have a good deal of explanatory power in terms of informing observers as to why Tokyo and Beijing have failed (and continue to fail) to agree to a definitive *modus operandi* concerning economic and security interests in the area. This is despite the fact that both governments have repeatedly made unspecific declarations about the desirability of joint co-operation and development over issues such as energy resources.

There is little doubt that the applicability of neo-realist tenets to the material and strategic dimensions of these disputes. This aspect of the disputes and realist explanations however are only one part of the story. Observers also need to appreciate other contributory variables such as domestic politics and popular sentiment in the two countries in understanding why the 2003 to 2006 ECS problems became so dramatically politicized

and tense, and why constructive approaches to these disagreements were so constrained. Structural realism for example relies very heavily on materialism and individualism to the detriment of social and ideational influences that when examined alongside domestic political considerations played a very significant role in politicizing and amplifying these maritime frictions. It is important therefore that a discussion of these maritime disputes includes the inter-relationship between domestic politics, popular sentiment, and bilateral approaches to the East China Sea. Such issues also provide observers with an appreciation of the factors that have served to dangerously escalate and politicize these disputes as seen from 2003 to 2006. As Fravel notes about the Pinnacle Islands dispute, the re-emergence of China will certainly present challenges for the Tokyo-Beijing relationship but the use of force in this dispute is unlikely to be the main destabilizing factor (Fravel, 2007-08:83).

Alongside de-prioritizing internal considerations, structural realist theories also tend to ignore cultural and regime differences among states mainly because structural realists contend that the realities of the system between states offers the same basic incentives for all the world's powerful states. Under these circumstances, the question of whether a state is democratic or autocratic is of little importance in terms of how it behaves towards other states. Little regard is also given to the people who are in charge of a state and those who conduct its foreign affairs. Structural realists thus see states as 'black boxes' in that they are all assumed to be the same, with the exception that some states are less powerful or more powerful than others (Mearsheimer, 2007:72). For these reasons, realism arguably does not shed enough light on what are certainly some of the main destabilizing factors in these disputes.

## **Neo-liberalism**

### Defining Neo-liberalism

Neo-liberalism (also known as neo-liberal institutionalism) is a theoretical approach that emphasizes the importance of organizations and institutions and their relationship to contracting and rationality in the international system between states (Martin, 2007: 110). For neo-liberal scholars, the real benefits of a sound institutional relationship between states can result in co-operation that remains sturdy even in the midst of significant shifts in power and interests. One reason for this is the contractual nature of institutions that are centered on so-called international regimes or the rules, norms, principles, and decision-making procedures between states (Krasner, 1982:185-87). Scholars from this 'third image' neo-liberal school thus emphasize the value of international organizations (IOs) in improving and stabilizing relations between states because they serve to help monitor the behavior of participant states and to make sure that they are abiding by their commitments and responsibilities (Martin, 2007:111-12).

### The Strengths and Weaknesses of a Neo-Liberal Approach

An advantage of this type of theoretical approach is that it helps observers to appreciate how weak or strong regimes and institutions between states can impact on how they deal with controversies and disputes. A key problem in China and Japan's overall relationship in this unprecedented era where the two countries are both powerful at the same time is

the weakness of reliable and tested post Cold War institutional mechanisms to reassure each other on disagreements like those in the ECS. As a result, Tokyo and Beijing are further constrained in their ability to co-ordinate their policies or to take the bold steps needed to resolve the disputes. The weak security and conflict prevention mechanisms and an inadequate institutional framework have arguably been contributory factors in the failure of both governments to prevent small yet troublesome incidents which have disproportionately shaken the wider relationship. The absence of stronger institutional relations, particularly in the security field, also arguably holds back a relationship in which the Chinese and the Japanese continue to hold a jaundiced view of the other side where both fundamentally distrust their neighbour (Kolodziej, 2005:152).

It is apparent that the lack of mature and fully developed bilateral and multi-lateral security organizations in North-east Asia plays an important role, due to their weakness and absence, in understanding why the Chinese and the Japanese have yet to establish a comprehensive and effective system of conflict prevention mechanisms, along with a *modus operandi* for dealing with incidents at sea. The under-developed institutional relationship in the political and security fields also has explanatory power in appreciating, amongst other reasons, why a poor understanding of the other side remains a shared characteristic among elite level and ordinary level figures in both countries.

Neo-liberal perspectives are mentioned here in relation to the ECS tensions because of the weakness of institutions and regimes that has been a contributory factor in the failure of the two states to foresee and prevent potential problems since the mid-1990s. In this

regard, the immaturity of the China-Japan institutional relationship is certainly an important factor. However, it would be difficult to hypothesize or predict what approaches to the ECS would be like if a stronger institutional relationship existed or had existed. For this reason, it would be even more questionable to speak counterfactually about what Tokyo-Beijing ties might have been like over issues such as the ECS. Nonetheless, it would be remiss to provide no mention of the weak institutional relationship in appreciating why ECS frictions got as heated as they did. In this regard, it is apparent that institutions such as the Asian Regional Forum (ARF) do not act as a sufficient break to prevent the escalation of tensions.

One could also understandably be drawn to assume that neo-liberal institutionalism is at least premature, or over-optimistic in gauging the effectiveness of institutions in their current format in discouraging Beijing and Tokyo from ratcheting up bilateral tensions over various issues such as the East China Sea (McCarthy, 2008:2). It is likewise apparent for example that China's selective embrace of institutions in the last twenty years or so has not resulted in a lessening of uncertainty about its motives, particularly in Japan. The post Cold War China has also involved itself in institutions that benefit it economically but it has, according to Saich, been 'less enthusiastic about those regional or global frameworks that would place real restrictions on Chinese military capabilities' (Saich, 2004: 309). Issues such as the East China Sea disputes are also not helped by the fact that the North-east Asia region is almost bereft of any effective regional systems designed to deal with conflict resolution and conflict management (Swanstrom and Kokubun, 2008:7). It is likewise evident as discussed in the introductory chapter that international arbitration for this dispute is not the preferred option of either Japan or

China even though such arbitration would be quite normal between two countries involved in a border dispute. China in particular has opted out of this obligation where it has been opposed to any such arbitration in its numerous border negotiations. A neo-liberal analysis might therefore provide insights into how tensions between the two states could be reduced. It does not however inform observers as to the factors that dramatically politicized and complicated approaches to the ECS disagreements from 2003 to 2006.

## **Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA)**

### Defining Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA)

Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) is a theoretical approach that analyses decision-making and especially the important role played by individuals and groups (for example, leaders, political groups and factions, military cliques, competing agencies and departments etc.) in the decision-making process of a state. FPA also emphasizes the context in which decision-makers make choices and define situations, and how this context influences their actions and perceptions (Breuning, 2007:ix). FPA's psychological emphasis contends that 'the mind of a foreign policy maker is not a *tabula rasa*' but one in which the 'culture, history, geography, economics, political institutions, ideology, demographics, and innumerable other factors shape the societal context in which the decision maker operates.' These influences alongside stress, uncertainty, group dynamics, and the personal characteristics of the individual decision makers, it is argued, play a crucial role in understanding the choices made by persons in power (Hudson, 2005:6-7;10-11).

### The Strengths and Weaknesses of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA)

There are numerous advantages in utilizing an FPA approach when examining foreign policy decisions and the processes behind them in relation to issues such as the East China Sea. FPA's actor-specificity and agent-orientation for example permits observers to appreciate how 'human agency, with its attendant change, creativity, accountability, and meaning' impacts upon the field of International Relations. It also provides insights into both the material *and* ideational components that make up the primary determinants of state behavior where the junction between the two is not the state but its human decision makers. FPA thus adds the human dimension to the theoretical mix in a field that often tends to speak of inter-state relations in an abstract and general structural sense without sufficient respect given to change, creativity, persuasion, and accountability (Hudson, 2005:1-5).

As argued by some scholars, FPA has contributed to observers' understandings about leaders' beliefs, the cognitive process that effect how new developments are understood, and how these mostly psychological influences impact upon foreign policy outcomes (Garrison *et al*: 2003:161-2). Hudson for example discusses the significance of the 'psychomilieu' of the individuals and groups central to a state's foreign policy formulation. This refers to the context and environment in which the main decision makers interpret and perceive incidents and events where 'discongruities' between perceptions and realities can result in less than satisfactory outcomes in terms of foreign

policy outcomes (Hudson, 2005:6-7;10-11). FPA analyses also have shed more light on international relations for observers by presenting some of the numerous and often overlooked individual, institutional, cultural, and societal factors that overlap to mould foreign policy outputs. This emphasis on the social world's structures, 'calculating agents', and 'bureaucratic politics' is thus a hallmark of FPA analyses and would seem to conform in places to constructivism (Garrison *et al*:2003:155;162). Such a heavy constructivist-like focus on individuals and groups and how they perceive and attach meaning to policy issues could certainly shed light on some of the social, ideational, and psychological aspects of sensitive disputes such as the East China Sea.

It is clear that Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) has a lot to offer scholars attempting to understand the processes and reasons why decision-makers make the choices that they do. In terms of this thesis' case study however it is ineffective to a certain extent in adequately understanding why, in the 2003 to 2006 period, the East China Sea disputes became so magnified and dramatically politicized. To begin with, FPA, as noted, places considerable weight on how so-called decision units define a situation and then act and respond in accordance with that definition. The attachment of meaning to events and incidents such as those that take place intermittently in the East China Sea is certainly a significant element in any discussion of the 2003 to 2006 ECS tensions. The definition of a situation in the eyes of individual decision-makers, groups, organizations, and bureaucracies however only tells observers one part of the wider story.

The issue of individual and group psychological considerations that FPA analysts value so much is undoubtedly an important component of understanding how elites (and the public) in Japan and China perceive the ECS disputes. These are however incomplete on their own in providing a more comprehensive explanation. FPA, with its emphasis on individuals, groups, their belief systems, and bargaining arguably does not shed enough light on how popular sentiment, electoral strategizing, and the exploitation of these by elites competing for power can place great pressure on rational and cool-headed decision-makers. FPA arguably does not grant enough respect to the rational calculations which leaders must consider, and the inter-relationship between all of these above factors in formulating politically feasible approaches to issues such as the East China Sea.

FPA for example places great weight on how foreign policy elites as individuals and in groups define a situation psychologically and emotionally rather than how individuals and actors within a state rationally calculate their domestic and external self-interests (Ripley, 1993:403). Arguably however, even when political leaders and groups in positions of power hold a quietly sanguine and non-alarmist opinion about the behavior of the other side, the demands of public sentiment, political factionalism, nationalist organizations, and domestic political competition from opposition parties can force the hand of governments to behave in assertive and vocal ways that can often run counter to their own intuition and interpretations of events. These domestically derived constraints and pressures when taken alongside underlying widely shared and often negative perceptions of the other side go further than FPA analyses in enlightening the copious domestic factors that can shape and mould the timeline of incidents, and the avenues left

open to governments, in terms of how they deal publicly with an incident or development.

## **Liberalism**

### Defining Liberalism

After considering possible realist, neo-liberal, and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) interpretations, this chapter will now proceed to argue the case for an actor-centered constructivist liberal understanding of what contributed to the highly politicized and dramatic East China Sea tensions of 2003 to 2006. As the name suggests, actor-centered constructivist liberalism is a variant of the liberal theoretical school of thought. The liberal model emphasizes the significance of 'second-image' state-level domestic actors, institutions, practices, and structures on state behaviour on the international stage (Panke and Risse, 2007:89-90). This approach has particularly gained traction since the 1990s in attempts to explain China's foreign policy towards neighbours such as Japan.

Before outlining the specific characteristics of the actor-centred constructivist liberal branch of classical liberalism, it is necessary to outline more generally the liberal school's take on international relations. In broad terms, a core characteristic of the liberal camp is its prioritising of domestic politics and domestic structure in explaining the international behaviour of states. Liberals thus see that domestic actors and domestic structures have a formidable bearing on a state's foreign-policy identities and interests and consequently

on a state's behaviour on the international stage. This 'inside-out' approach argues the over-riding importance of domestic properties such as actors, institutions, and practices as critical explanatory variables (Panke and Risse, 2007:90).

Realists assume that citizens hold allegiance to their state above everything else whereas liberals do not share this view. Rather, liberals contend that popular support for state policies can never be taken for granted. A state's behavior and consequently the extent of international conflict or co-operation are also reflective of the configuration and make-up of state preferences (Moravcsik, n.d.:8;10-11). State preferences are shaped and influenced by societal ideas, interests, and institutions through which governments calculate and formulate their strategies and policies (Moravcsik, 1997:513). As explained more precisely by Moravcsik:

'In the liberal conception of domestic politics, the state is not an actor but a representative institution constantly subject to capture and recapture, construction and reconstruction by coalitions of social actors...Government policy is therefore constrained by the underlying identities, interests, and power of individuals and groups (inside and outside the state apparatus) who constantly pressure the central decision makers to pursue policies consistent with their preferences' (Moravcsik, 1997:518).

On an issue as sensitive as the East China Sea, a liberal approach prioritizes the effect of internal and domestic pressures and influences in China and Japan on approaches adopted by, and left open to, the governments in each state.

### The Variations within the Liberal School

As one might expect for such a wide school of interpretation, liberalism contains within it its fair share of consensus and conflict. Some of the major liberal approaches include a) Putnam's rationalist 'two-level game', b) democratic peace theories, c) economic liberalism and interdependence theories, d) utilitarian liberalism, e) republican liberalism, f) liberal inter-governmentalism, and g) constructivist liberalism<sup>11</sup> which is discussed in detail below (Panke and Risse, 2007:89-108).

### The Advantages of Liberal Interpretations

The liberal approach holds a number of advantages over alternative theoretical schools such as realism. A major advantage is that liberalism can more effectively account for change and variation in the international system when compared to the generally static and fixed view of history as perceived by realists. This is all the more pertinent in a post-Cold War era where developments within and between states have dumbfounded realists. Liberalism also provides a more in-depth appreciation of the substantive elements that need to be considered in formulating state policies, for example what precise issues will merit attention in particular circumstances (Moravcsik, n.d.:36-7). Realism assumes that state preferences are fixed or exogenous, best explained by the vagaries of the external

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<sup>11</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the different variations within the liberal school, see Panke and Risse, 2007:89-108.

international system and the material capabilities of states (Moravcsik, 1997:536). Understanding how issues shift from the plain of so-called ‘low politics’ to ‘high politics’ and vice versa is not adequately explained, and is indeed treated as irrelevant by realists. Liberalism however accounts for this in detail. As such the liberal approach sheds light on how domestic politics and popular sentiment affected the post-2002 ECS disputes.

### **Digging Deeper: Applying an Actor-Centred Constructivist Liberal Approach**

Within the domestic realm some scholars prioritise domestic actors or the dynamics of the interactions between such actors in the political, economic and social spheres. Other observers however emphasize domestic structural issues such as political constitutions, dominant ideologies, and economic systems. The ‘inside-out’ approach thus contains differing interpretations that contrast in terms of how scholars examine the foreign-policy decisions of single states and also the dynamics of interactions between states (Panke and Risse, 2007:90-92).

The actor-centred constructivist liberalism utilized in this case study is just one of numerous branches within the liberal school. In order to adopt a more specific liberal approach, some observers suggest cutting the liberal school in half between ‘actor-centred’ and ‘structure-centred’ approaches. The actor-centred camp is divided further into ‘actor-centred constructivist liberalism’ and ‘actor-centred rationalist liberalism.’

The structure-centred camp also has two approaches, that of ‘structure-centred rationalist liberalism’ and ‘structure-centred constructivist liberalism.’ Liberal scholars such as Panke and Risse therefore compartmentalise the liberal approach into four areas that can overlap depending on one’s perspective. These are a) those who choose to emphasize domestic actors, b) those who emphasize domestic structures, and those who lean toward c) rationalist or d) constructivist assumptions (Panke and Risse, 2007:89;91-2). Two key arenas of debate therefore exist between rationalists and constructivists, and between scholars who consider domestic structure and polity as the most important decision-making influence and those who argue that domestic actors fill this role. In the first arena lies rationalism and constructivism. These are, as contended by Wendt, ‘meta-theories’ that rest on contrasting assumptions about the nature and constitution of actors (Wendt 1999).

Constructivism positions itself on the ontological assumption that inter-subjective meaning is constitutive for intentional action and assumes that the actor is not ontologically prior but rather that agent and structure are mutually constitutive (Wendt, 1999). Constructivists assume that both agency and structure are mutually constituted where agency refers to the social ability of individuals and states to shape and influence the environment they live in. Emphasizing this ‘mutual constitution’ assertion, Fierke explains:

‘the subjects of international politics are not uniformly and universally rational egoists, but have distinct identities shaped by the cultural, social, and political – as well as material – circumstances in which they are embedded. They are not static but ever evolving as they interact with each other and their environment’ (Fierke, 2007:170-71).

An actor-centered constructivist liberal approach arguably serves best to present both the ideational and the rational influences that inform policy makers in their decision-making on an issue as politically and historically sensitive as the East China Sea.

While constructivist assumptions are an important element of this research's theoretical approach, constructivist liberalism however needs to be distinguished from so-called liberal constructivism and its assumption that values stem from the type of socialization between states. Rather, constructivist liberals assert 'in a liberal vein that ideas and communication matter when they are most congruent with existing domestic values and institutions' (Moravcsik, 1997:540). For liberal constructivists, the focus is more on the ideas within peoples' heads, the primacy of norms, 'cross-cultural communication', and how these affect behavior among individuals and political actors (An Online Exploration of Diplomatic History and Foreign Affairs) rather than on the inter-relationship between domestic politics and identities as valued by constructivist liberals.

The symbiosis between the two is arguably best exemplified by looking through a constructivist liberal lens. As illustrated by Deans in his appraisal of the Pinnacle Islands dispute, nationalist sentiment on its own in both countries should not be taken at face value. Rather in this case study, the symbolic relevance of ECS issues for wider domestic political conflict, political power, and instability, is seen as the central factor that drives these disputes and motivates nationalistic individuals and groups in Japan and China to

pressure their top decision-makers to make an assertive stand and consequently raise the level of tensions surrounding the East China Sea disagreements (Deans, 2000:128-129).

### The Advantages and Disadvantages of Rationalist Liberal Perspectives

The focus of actor-centred rational liberals is the power of domestic interest groups acting rationally in shaping foreign policy outcomes. According to Checkel, ‘rationalists emphasize coercion, cost/benefit calculations, and material incentives, whereas constructivists emphasize social learning, socialization, and social norms’ (Checkel, 2001:553). In this regard, a constructivist liberal angle has arguably a greater explanatory power in that it presents the material, rational *and* ideational interests that states hold and have to consider.

The rational liberal approach is effective to an extent in explaining for example the contrasts between rational and ideational interests at the domestic level between Germany and the United States in the lead-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq for example. Liberalism’s constructivist variant however sheds more light on how Americans ‘framed the war as a war against terrorism and (Saddam) Hussein as enmity.’ In a post-1945 war-averse Germany however, this framing did not impact as strongly among German voters. In these examples, the constructivist strand of liberalism is more effective in explaining how historical memories and collective identities strongly influence the creation of so-called ‘in-and-out groups’, how issues are framed, and how collective identities and framings are inter-connected. As a consequence, the constructivist strain, in particular the

actor-centred variant enlightens observers as to when and why ideational factors (when placed alongside rational interests) can result in foreign policy outcomes. A clear weakness of the rationalist variant is that it exaggerates the role and power of rational interests such as political, material and economic factors and does not grant enough respect to how these factors *when combined with* normative ideas and identities can influence, empower, and constrain decision-makers. Constructivist liberalism therefore serves a useful purpose by complementing and adding to its rationalist counterpart (Panke and Risse, 2007:105).

In the Sino-Japanese relationship, it is apparent that political and economic relations based on strictly rationalist calculations are only one part of the story, and that despite the obvious benefits of stronger political and economic ties, China's relations with Tokyo continue to be a mismatch between important interests and deep distrust (Yang, 2007:250). Rational economic interests for example are just one half of the 'warm economics and chill politics' that have characterised the relationship since the 1990s, and which have presented a real challenge to stabilising relations. As argued by Manicom, in the East China Sea, what observers have seen is a 'marriage' or interaction of both the material and ideational aspects in the disputes where prior to 2003, the nationalist element of these disputes was confined largely to the Pinnacle Islands issue. Since 2003 however, nationalist constituencies in Japan and China have viewed 'the material wealth of the East China Sea in uncompromising ideational terms; this is a development that has increased the difficulty for Beijing and Tokyo to agree on a workable joint development proposal (Manicom, 2008b:390).

## The Advantages and Disadvantages of a Structure-Centred Liberal Perspective

In the second actor versus structure dimension of the liberal debate lies the question of which is more relevant to explaining foreign policy outcomes, domestic structures (polity) resulting in a structure-centred focus or domestic actors (politics), resulting in an actor-centred focus. For structure-centred debates, the central belief is that a state's behaviour vis-à-vis other states is primarily influenced by its domestic structures i.e. its social, economic, and political institutions rather than the structure of the international system. In this model, states are still viewed as the most important actors but they are not 'black boxes' in the realist sense of states responding in similar fashion to *external* shifts and developments. Instead states such as the PRC and Japan (as with all states) differ from each other by virtue of 'the properties of their polity which influence state behaviour in their interaction with others' (Panke and Risse, 2007:92-3). A disadvantage however of prioritising structure over actors is that it arguably does not examine in enough detail the ways in which the inter-linking of domestic actors such as individual politicians, competing agencies and bureaucracies, military figures and cliques, public and nationalist pressure groups from the 1990s onwards, media and business organizations, political opposition groups, and political factions for example impacted upon the East China Sea disputes in the period from 2003 to 2008.

### The Advantages of an Actor-Centred Liberal Perspective

In similar fashion to the structure-centred perspective, the actor-centred approach does not view states as entities whose interests and conduct are shaped primarily by the international system. It differs however from the structure-centred approach in the way it views how identities and interests are influenced. According to the actor-centred perspective, such interests can shift and change depending on the time and policy issue because state interests are primarily influenced by the beliefs, interests, or identities of domestic groups. Broadly speaking, the actor-centred liberal approach examines both ‘the interest and ideational constellations’ of domestic actors and groups and the ways in which they pressure decision-makers and influence policy interests (Panke and Risse, 2007:92-3).

Applying this to Japan and to an increasingly pluralistic China, the actor-centred liberal angle notes the importance of the fact that such states have numerous interest groups and constituencies with often conflicting viewpoints to deal with and often appease in both their domestic and international policy decisions. These groups, ranging from business groups, political factions, grass-root nationalist organisations, left and right wing commentators, think-tanks, military cadres in the PLAN or JMSDF for example and so forth all compete to influence and pressure their political leaders to behave in ways favourable to their interests and inclinations.

In China and Japan, a key factor in understanding the extent of the ECS tensions in the 2003 to 2006 period was arguably the influence of numerous domestic groups and domestic considerations, and how they placed constraints and pressures on their governments to act according to their preferences. These domestic pressures which tied in with shifts in the traditional diplomatic *modus operandi* between Beijing and Tokyo after the late 1990s, political restructuring that empowered more domestic actors, and a dramatic rise in shared negative attitudes towards the other side resulting from numerous negative interactions, all served to contribute to a heightened level of tension and the dramatic politicisation of the East China Sea disputes. As Manicom observed in 2008, ‘the result is that the East China Sea dispute has become hostage to developments in other aspects of the China-Japan relationship because the number of issues that offend the sensibilities of nationalist groups and peripheral policymakers has increased’ (Manicom, 2008b:391). For these outlined reasons, an actor-centred liberal perspective has arguably greater explanatory power than a structure-centred perspective.

### The Advantages of a Constructivist Liberal Perspective

One of the main advantages of the constructivist liberal approach over the rational liberal approach is the emphasis placed on agency and norm diffusion and its focus on *both* structure and agency (Checkel, 2001:558). For rationalists, interests are driven by power and this thesis does not deny this. However, for a more comprehensive analysis of the effect of domestic factors on the East China Sea disputes, rational interests should not be separated from the context in which they exist and the issue around which they exist. Actor-centered constructivist liberalism arguably functions better to illustrate how context and rational interests overlap because constructivists do not deny rationality but place value on context and how individuals are embedded in an environment where issues such as culture, identity, history and meaning matter.

As discussed in Chapter One and later in this work, the utilisation and exploitation of these ideational themes in the context of Sino-Japanese relations should not be underestimated or sidelined. According to Moravcsik for example, the strength of feeling surrounding national identity is frequently exploited by both private groups and policy makers, and that this is a feature that marks ideational or constructivist liberalism out from alternative theories such as realism (Moravcsik, 1997:526). One of the major ways that such ideational issues affect decision-making elites is the assumption of constructivist liberalism that social actors within a state play an essential role in supporting their government on the proviso that the ruling elite behave in accordance to

their own ‘identity-based preferences.’ In doing so, governments are given legitimacy in the eyes of social actors (Moravcsik, 1997:525). In China and Japan, the strength of feeling toward their neighbor since the 1990s and concerns about who is winning and who is losing in the East China Sea ‘game’ has increased even more in strength as an issue for elite politics in the PRC, as an electoral card in Japan, and as a controversy that can easily rouse the passions of the ordinary Japanese and Chinese publics. The political value of these maritime disagreements at all levels of political life in the two states has thus compelled their leaders to tread very delicately in their approaches to the ECS and arguably has often prevented them from taking more flexible and constructive avenues in negotiations.

Constructivist liberalism’s emphasis on how an issue is framed and argued about, along with its relationship to social learning is arguably all the more pertinent when debates and arguments on certain issues (such as the East China Sea) strongly resonate with prevailing ideas, interests, and identities (Panke and Risse, 2007:96). This is not to say that the domestic competition for political power or the international competition for wealth, capabilities and resources do not matter. Rather, it is argued here that rational interests and bargaining alone without due respect to the ideational dimension of decision-making considerations leaves any examination incomplete particularly in this dyad involving Japan and China where issues such as identity, history and memories still cut deep in the psyches of ordinary level and elite level citizens in both states.

In this regard, decision-makers and other elites such as political rivals and opponents in Japan and China deeply appreciate how negative views of the other state can resonate as a sensitive issue among their respective publics and elites. They also understand how the framing of the other side as a danger, a threat or an affront to national dignity can benefit those in power or those who seek power. This has proven to be politically useful on the home front but also acts as a constraint on behaviour out of fear of the electoral and political consequences in the case of Japan and an undermining of top elites' standing among other elites and the wider public in the case of the PRC. For this reason, when it comes to delicate issues such as the East China Sea, governments have been shown to draw upon these sentiments and speak though not always act in ways that resonate well with the ideas and identities of their home populations and which fend off possible criticism from political challengers and opponents. The nexus of elite and political competition in both China and Japan and the intensification of negative popular sentiment toward the other state have meant that on controversies like the East China Sea that the ability of governments to deal with these disputes in a more moderate way was weakened in the period from 2003 to 2006.

#### China and an Actor-Centred Constructivist Liberal Perspective

In a case like the 2003 to 2008 East China Sea disagreements, the inter-linking of domestic politics and popular sentiment is, as shown throughout this thesis, apparent. This was in a context where the exploitation of historical and ideational issues by numerous domestic actors as a card for elite competition in the PRC, and the enhanced

power of these issues to spur popular sentiment had dramatically increased since the 1990s. In China, bitter collective memories of Japan's brutal occupation of mainland Chinese territories from 1931 to 1945, and the infamous Nanking Massacre in 1937 still persist in colouring the Chinese public's perceptions of Japan where such sentiment strongly resonates among both ordinary and elite level Chinese. As discussed in detail in Chapter Three, Chinese elites, most notably former General Secretary Jiang Zemin also actively encouraged and tapped into these feelings from the early 1990s onwards and exploited them to defend and cement their own positions in an uncertain and dynamic era. In doing so, China's leadership arguably fed a monster which by the late 1990s had become much more difficult to control and manage.

From the Chinese perspective, the fact that numerous Japanese political elites have failed to show sincere contrition for Japan's war record along with seemingly behaving in ways to contain China's rise since the 1990s and preventing the recovery of Taiwan have also served to intensify anti-Japanese sentiment in the PRC (Christiansen, 1999:49; Gries, 2005:846-47). Lingering memories of the cruelty inflicted upon the Chinese by Japan when taken alongside the occasional controversial statements made by Japanese elites has meant that it is not difficult for the Chinese to envision attempts by Japan to re-militarise and dominate Asia as in the past. As a result of these deeply ingrained impressions, negative sentiment and ill-will towards the Japanese still persist in the PRC and have in fact worsened since the late 1990s where ordinary and elite level Chinese remain vigilant to any behaviour from the Japanese that may re-open old wounds or confirm long-held suspicions (Roy, 2005:197;201).

The Pinnacle Islands are a sensitive piece in this jigsaw of history and identity-related issues and are directly related to Chinese national identity and pride because these territories are considered to have been stolen by the Japanese during the era of humiliation by foreign powers (1842 to 1948) (Patalano, 2011). In this regard, issues of national pride and territorial integrity in the East China Sea involving the distrusted Japanese can touch deeply upon the feelings and sensitivities of all Chinese people, a fact that both empowers and constrains decision-makers in Beijing. Popular and often negative sentiment towards Japan on such issues is not necessarily exclusively top-down or bottom-up phenomenon, but rather appears increasingly to have become a phenomenon with its origin somewhere in between. Since the 1990s in particular, Chinese leaders and elites have both encouraged and responded to increasingly vocal and pluralistic Chinese actors and groups demanding a more assertive Chinese response to issues such as the ECS in ways that seem appropriate to the new more powerful China.

The bottom-up element of anti-Japanese sentiment in China has strengthened since the 1990s as a factor that CCP elites must pay greater attention to in their public approaches to sensitive issues like the ECS. Looking at the protests over the 1996 Pinnacle Islands incident, Downs and Saunders note for example that while some demonstrators may have used the protests for ulterior purposes, a large majority seemed to have been sincerely angered by Japan's behaviour at the time and how it affected China's claim to the islands. While Chinese elites have exploited and benefited from nationalistic controversies with

Japan, it would be an oversight to neglect the heightened intensity of nationalism in China in the 1990s and its existence alongside the state's utilisation of nationalism for its own ends. The 1996 protests for example involved thousands of protesters not just in China but also in North America and were clearly indicative of a rising nationalist trend amongst all Chinese people, including the Chinese diaspora. Even within the PRC, it is clear, based on Downs and Saunders' evidence and the strength of numbers in the 1996 protests, that a sizeable number of Chinese including students and even military figures were dissatisfied with their government's approach to the Pinnacle Islands that they were willing to risk punishment to express their anger. This upsurge in anti-Japanese sentiment has been assisted by the CCP's aforementioned exploitation of historical and nationalistic issues to bolster the regime's legitimacy after the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre and the uncertainties of the early 1990s. The success of the CCP's exploitation of these issues has proven to be a double-edged sword that can assist the regime but also undermine it via other elite challengers and popular sentiment. As such, the CCP must grant greater respect to popular sentiment when considering its foreign policy options (Downs and Saunders, 1998-1999:139-140).

In its dealings with Japan, such is the intensity of negative sentiment and historical memory involved that any disagreements involving Japan are highly charged issues at the domestic level which top elites must very delicately navigate through. Appreciating the depth of this anti-Japanese sentiment among the Chinese public and its possible exploitation by political competitors, top decision-making elites in the CCP know that they run the risk of undermining their position within the party, their nationalist

credentials and the legitimacy of the regime if they do not present an image of ardently defending the nation's dignity and territorial integrity (Ramos-Mrosovsky, 2008:934). This is all the more important in a non-democratic state like the PRC where approaches taken to such emotionally charged controversies are one of the central ways in which the Chinese public can judge and evaluate their leaders' performance (Townsend, 1996). Assertively defending China's territorial integrity and national pride also conforms with the CCP's view of itself as a party that best serves the people in terms of standing up and fighting for the nation unlike earlier pre-1948 regimes in China who compromised and capitulated to foreign powers (Downs and Saunders, 1998-1999: 119). These outlined domestic factors have significantly complicated the ways in which the Party leadership can deal with the East China Sea problems, and have made them a much more volatile issue to deal with. Actor-centred constructivist liberalism is arguably an appropriate theoretical lens through which to examine the inter-relationship between the ECS disagreements and domestic actors and considerations.

### Japan and an Actor-Centred Constructivist Liberal Perspective

At the diplomatic and bureaucratic level, successive Japanese governments have understood that the optimal approach to China in terms of Japan's national interests is one where tensions are reduced, where a constructive working relationship is maintained, and where any controversies that could cause instability in China with negative implications for Japan are avoided or at least mitigated. Examples of destabilizing

developments in the PRC that would hurt Japan might include the Chinese economy crashing, large numbers of Chinese refugees fleeing their homeland for neighboring countries, and Chinese elites adopting a more aggressive stance in terms of its foreign policy (Roy, 2003:2). Cool-headed diplomats and bureaucrats in Japan understand the importance of diplomatic approaches that serve to help prevent these outcomes and to pursue Japanese objectives.

The palpable rise in negative sentiment in Japan toward China since Tiananmen and into the 1990s however has proven to be a useful card to exploit in electoral strategizing and in which to pressure top-level decision makers. Right-wing Japanese elites and groups in particular have utilised and benefited from this rise in anti-Chinese sentiment. Of course, considerable structural differences between a democratic Japan and a one-party Chinese state exist at the domestic political level. The shift in Japanese thinking toward the PRC, when compared to generally favourable impressions throughout the 1980s, alongside some major political and economic readjustments in the 1990s, has made it more difficult and challenging for sensitive issues like the ECS to be dealt with quietly and from behind the scenes by experienced figures within the Japanese elite. Since the late 1990s, such figures and their endeavours have come under a barrage of public and media scrutiny.

While the depth of anti-Chinese sentiment in Japan is not as intense as anti-Japanese sentiment in China, significant insecurities which developed amongst both elites and the public about Japan's relatively diminished role in the world since the 1990s contributed

to the Japanese sense of vulnerability vis-à-vis the PRC. The post-Cold War years have been years in which the Japanese economy, the source of so much Japanese pride, has weakened relative to China, wounding Japanese self-esteem, and intensifying the Japanese sense of frustration over their nation's power and prestige, once unchallenged in the region. In addition, fears over the rise of China exemplified by the PRC's unprecedented military spending, media coverage of Beijing-sponsored initiatives such as the 'Patriotic Education Campaign' of the early to mid-1990s which fed anti-Japanese sentiment in the 1990s, and the rise in intrusions into what are considered to be Japanese waters heavily influenced how the Japanese looked upon more assertive Chinese behaviour in areas such as the East China Sea (Self, 2002:82).

The post-1945 era up until the mid-1990s, was one in which, from the Chinese perspective, it seemed that Japan was contrite over its wartime behaviour, and this contrition, it seemed, was tacitly acknowledged in its emphasis on economic rather than political and military power. This has changed however in the new post-Cold War era where many Japanese believed that sufficient time had passed since the Second World War and where war guilt is no longer as strong a factor in Japan's approaches to China (Self, 2002:82). The greater assertiveness witnessed in Japan in terms of national identity-related issues was assisted by what was considered to be hypocritical behavior on the Chinese side since the late 1980s. Since 1989 for example, the Chinese have been seen by the Japanese to be continuously moralizing about Japanese misdeeds half a century earlier while the communist regime mercilessly crushed the Tiananmen protests in June 1989 and stamped out calls for democracy from its own people and in western

provinces such as Tibet and Xinjiang. Such hypocrisy, as many Japanese see it, along with the persistent calls for greater atonement from Japan caused many Japanese to increasingly tire of China's 'Japan bashing' and its stubborn refusal to move on from the past (Self, 2002:87).

Many Japanese actors and groups has addressed their sense of frustration by pressuring for foreign policy changes that emphasize Japan's political and military power rather than just its decreasing economic power relative to China, and for Japan to stand among other world powers as a normal state (Ramos-Mrosovsky, 2008:919). These calls have not come without resistance from within Japan, in particular from Japan's political left wing. To counter this, advocates of a stronger Japan less constrained by its post-1945 pacifist constitution point to a rising China threatening Japan's interests in areas like the ECS in order to justify the need for such defence changes. A product of such heated debates within Japanese domestic politics is that 'China bashing' has become 'a winning formula' for those seeking to push their agendas (Bremmer, 2005).

Japanese defence changes since the 1990s suggest that those calling for a stronger line against China have been successful to an extent. As observed by Ramos-Mrosovsky, the intensification of 'Chinese saber rattling' over the Pinnacle Islands has served to embolden those within Japan calling for a more robust approach to such issues and a strengthening of Japan's military capabilities (Ramos-Mrosovsky, 2008:920). It is apparent then that the resurgent ECS disputes have significant political currency and

weight in Japan and that they can easily arouse the emotions of the Japanese public and their political representatives. This often decisive inter-relationship between these maritime disagreements and domestic politics and popular sentiment in Japan helped to lean this research toward adopting an actor-centred constructivist liberal theoretical approach.

### Summary

Given these outlined circumstances in the PRC and Japan and the increased salience of inter-linked issues such as domestic politics, nationalism, popular sentiment, and history since the 1990s, examining the 2003 to 2008 ECS disagreements from an actor-centred constructivist liberal perspective arguably provides an appropriate lens through which to examine these maritime problems. In particular, such a theoretical approach gives special emphasis to the role of the individuals, nationalist groups and organisations, party factions, media outlets and so forth, and how these placed constraints on top-decision makers that had a restrictive effect on positive approaches to the East China Sea problems in that period.

## **Research Design**

### Introduction

This thesis draws its findings from a rich pool of primary sources that include unpublished Track Two conference papers, official government statements and press releases, speeches and statements by politicians and organisations in Japan and China, newspaper articles, and public opinion polls. These data are reinforced by over eighty interviews carried out over a total of approximately eight months over the course of three years (2006, 2007, and 2008). The research data used is also directly or indirectly relevant to the period from August 19<sup>th</sup> 2003 to June 18<sup>th</sup> 2008. These primary source materials are in turn supported with secondary source arguments that discuss the impact of factors such as historical controversies, national identity, domestic politics, electoral strategizing in Japan, elite competition within the PRC, and so forth on approaches to bilateral issues such as the East China Sea problems.

### Method of Inquiry

The method of inquiry is a qualitative research design with an emphasis on reliable primary and secondary sources reinforced with interview data aimed at addressing the ‘how’ and ‘why’ reasons for the dramatic politicization and amplification of the resurgent ECS disputes from 2003 to 2006. This method of inquiry and the data used, through a comprehensive review of the primary and secondary source material along with the hitherto unseen interview data, presents the ways in which domestic politics and popular

sentiment affected bilateral approaches to the 2003 to 2008 ECS disagreements. This research design and method of inquiry within an actor-centered constructivist liberal framework also acts as a convenient tool with which a researcher can outline the numerous actors and domestic pressures which constrained and influenced the choice of options open to top-decision makers in both countries. The interview and non-interview data presented also shed light on the events and developments that helped lead to and played a contributory role in ratcheting up serious frictions over the East China Sea between Tokyo and Beijing from 2003 to 2006.

#### *Non-Interview Data*

Arguments and points of views from the core texts on the East China Sea disputes and the wider Sino-Japanese relationship are also incorporated. The broad scope of such non-interview data permit a utilization of data that is not merely confined to official government statements from press secretaries or government ministries that focus in on government to government interactions. Official government positions are noteworthy but they are also almost always acted upon in a very public world and thus locating the influence of these factors in foreign policy approaches to these disputes would be more difficult to discern. The wide variety of non-interview data used in this thesis serve to shed more light on the relevance of domestic considerations such as party factions, nationalistic politicians, lobby groups, competing agencies and bureaucracies, public opinion, and media pressure, and how they related to the destabilization in approaches to the disputes after 2002. This research plan also provides greater detail about the

interaction between domestic actors in Japan and China and how these interactions impact upon approaches to the ECS disputes, thus illustrating a range of possible outcomes that decision-makers must consider before implementing policy. As with the interview data, the non-interview data displays within them themes and commonalities that are reflected in both types of interview and non-interview data, and serve to buttress each other in terms of this research's hypothesis. The non-interview data thus also pointed toward domestic politics and popular sentiment as major contributory factors in how the post-2002 East China Sea disagreements were perceived and dealt with.

### Interview Data

The interview data element of this research design utilized so-called 'semi-structured interviews' that involved asking interviewees a set of broad questions written in advance but also were flexible enough to allow interviewees the chance to make suggestions and to speak freely (Björkdahl, 2002:52). The interview data collection process also involved a number of phases in terms of how the interview data were evaluated. In the first phase, over eighty interviews were carried out in Japan and China, and by email correspondence. The second phase saw the transcription of the interview data and the creation of a qualitative text of sorts or 'general text corpus.' This was followed by a third phase which involved a trawling through the text for keywords, themes, trends, and patterns of commonality which pointed the research in a certain direction. The fourth and final phase involved a comparison of these trends used by Chinese and Japanese interviewees respectively in order to show how domestic politics and popular sentiment

affected approaches to the East China Sea dispute from 2003 to 2008 (Wiener, 2009:187).

The interview process involved asking the interviewees a pre-set number of similar questions, which were altered slightly, depending on the country location and the year of the interviews. Examples of questions asked include ‘What do you regard to be the reasons for the rise in tensions over the East China Sea in recent years?’, ‘What part do nationalism and domestic politics in Japan and China play in these disputes?’ and ‘What factors led to the groundbreaking ‘principled consensus’ in June 2008?’ The open-ended question format was intentional and was aimed at allowing the interviewees to speak freely and openly about the East China Sea problems. As such, this format of questions permitted the interviewees to speak freely and without direction about issues, and to provide explanations ranging from resource motivations, strategic calculations, domestic politics, ideational factors etc. or a combination of two or all of these relevant ECS variables, without ‘forcing’ the generation of results that emphasized only one. Conscious of the possibility of selection bias, the broad scope and number of interviewees interviewed was intentional and was aimed at ensuring an unbiased and wide survey of views represented in both countries. These interviewees responded at random and at their own free will to email requests for interviews sent by the author to well over two hundred individuals and their institutions in Japan and China.

## Interview Method

### *Benefits of Interviews as a Data Source*<sup>12</sup>

Alongside the wide selection of other primary and secondary sources, the strong influence of domestic politics and popular sentiment in this case study can also be appreciated and evidenced when one sees that there is a strong trend of similarly expressed statements and comments by both Japanese and Chinese interviewees. Utilizing descriptive qualitative data such as that from a large number of person-to-person interviews serves a useful purpose in this regard. Interviews are also highly useful when gathering information and tracing a process concerning phenomena such as ideational factors for example (Alvesson and Deetz 2000: 215-216; Checkel 2001: 565-566). In cases such as this where official secrecy limits the available information on bilateral negotiations on the East China Sea, interviews provide an important complement to other written material on this case study. Interviews can thus shed some light on issues that lie behind the barrier of secrecy (Lars-Göran Stenelo, 1985). By incorporating interview data from elites in both states who have their ears to the ground in terms of the positions and perspectives of top-level decision-makers, this thesis presents an insight into what the thinking is like at the elite level and provides a view of the kind of constraints and difficulties that elites had to deal with when approaching the post-2002

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<sup>12</sup> The transcribed interview notes are available upon request.

East China Sea disputes. Hitherto unseen interview data also adds to existing data available on the ECS disagreements.

Due to the fact that the interviewees are seen to be positioned close to both policy makers and their own respective societies, and have a varying influence, on how the ECS disputes are approached by their governments, it will be shown using their consciously articulated statements and comments as evidence alongside other important primary and secondary source data, how domestic politics and popular sentiment negatively impacted the ECS disputes from 2003 to 2006. This evidence alongside the fact that it derives from a large and random group of informed elites from a variety of vantage points as close observers of events also means that it is arguably not just a coincidental meeting of minds or individuals happening to agree on something in Japan or in China but rather is reflective of a small representative survey of perspectives and sentiment expressed and stated by their respective societies at large.

### The Interviewees

The vast majority of interviewees were Chinese and Japanese scholars and experts who possess a solid understanding of the East China Sea disputes and who hail from diverse backgrounds including government officials and researchers, think-tank commentators, esteemed scholars from the fields of law, politics, and international relations, along with retired military elites, retired politicians, and journalists. As such, the interviewees were for the most part representative of almost all the various fields of influence in Japanese

and Chinese life. The predominantly academic interviewees used in this research differentiate from government officials because they are independent and unelected individuals and do not exist to continuously please and appease their home populations or other elites.

In locating where the interviewees might be positioned in the decision-making hierarchy, it is tempting to borrow from Manicom when he argues that there are three groups of domestic actors who influence and are influenced by ‘the ideational dimension of Chinese and Japanese policy towards their territorial dispute in the East China Sea.’ These groups are identified as: a) core policymakers (who represent the will of the government in power); b) peripheral policymakers; and c) popular nationalist groups. In the ECS, the core policymakers in Japan and China have guided policy according to three objectives which include actions to reinforce claims to the disputed territory, dispute management to prevent escalation, and actions to facilitate the exploitation of resources located in the disputed territories (Manicom, 2008b:378). In this thesis, the interviewees mentioned might arguably fall predominantly within the second category of ‘peripheral policymakers’ because they sit somewhere in the middle between the core policymakers and popular nationalist groups. They are therefore well-positioned for research purposes in that they are able to influence and access public discourse (Wiener, 2009:191).

The choice and quantity of interviewees also means that the research, when combined with other data sources, possesses both data richness and prescriptive richness with a strong emphasis on primary source data from individuals speaking freely with a high

standard of honesty on these contentious issues. The interviewees chosen were similarly better placed to speak more openly and frankly about these tensions than other figures such as current high level political and military officials. The focus on scholars' views is thus justified by virtue of the fact that in both societies' scholars are understood as the most informed, independent, and knowledgeable figures from whom a reliable and open evaluation of the ECS disputes can be gained.

## **Research Constraints**

### Interview Data

The choice of predominantly academic interviewees as the primary source of interview data was also based not only on methodological reasons but also on research constraints. Such limitations included the fact that it was very difficult to find a wide range of current and high level political and military figures in China and Japan who were willing to speak openly and honestly about these disputes and their still on-going negotiations. It is likewise apparent that a large scale survey of the views of hundreds of ordinary Chinese and Japanese people in order to reach a conclusion as to how factors such as popular sentiment, national identity, and domestic politics influenced approaches to these disagreements from 2003 to 2008 would not necessarily yield significant results. Utilizing well-informed Chinese and Japanese interviewees served as a more stable and more manageable foundation for compiling data than interviewing people on the street.

The usefulness of this interview data is not with its limitations however. For example, a researcher embarking on a preliminary attempt at examining the 2003 to 2008 ECS disputes can only really address that which is openly stated. A deeply theoretically focused approach such as a discourse analysis for example was not the objective of this work because it distracts from the rich empirical data that sheds more light on the facts of this case study. The limited resources available to a lone researcher and the considerable cultural and linguistic obstacles that such an analysis would represent to a non-native third party researcher also pushed this work away from a deep and heavily theoretical analysis of language and discourse.

#### Non-Interview Data

The utilization of a wide selection of non-interview data is also not without its limitations and constraints. Most notably, the requirement of fluency or at least high proficiency in both the Japanese and Chinese languages to present a totally comprehensive analysis of non-English language sources has influenced the choice of sources used. This research is also arguably only one of a handful of sources on the 2003 to 2008 disputes that attempt to address or touch upon the possible theoretical perspectives on these disagreements. In this regard, a thesis that moves towards or looks at this case study from a discourse analysis perspective for example would feasibly be very difficult at this stage because it would require extensive expertise in two very different non-English languages, in terms of both oral and written data. It would also necessitate a deep cultural understanding of the nuances of Chinese and Japanese words, phrases, and terminology.

Primary source non-interview data in this thesis consists predominantly of directly translated and/or stand alone English language sources from Japan and China. Third party sources from newspapers and other media outlets elsewhere are also used to shed light on issues from within each state. The barrier of secrecy in terms of military and diplomatic affairs also acts as a constraint on the type of non-interview data that can be accessed.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Leading Up to 2003: Domestic Politics and Bilateral Relations**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents in greater detail the ways in which domestic political considerations and popular sentiment in Japan and China in the years leading up to 2003 contributed to the inflammatory and volatile atmosphere surrounding the East China Sea frictions after August 2003.

As numerous interviewed Chinese and Japanese experts have argued, the quest for energy resources, though important, is not the over-riding factor in appreciating what contributed to the politicization of these disputes from the 1990s onwards and particularly from 2003 to 2006 (Jiro Yamaguchi, 06/10/2007). One leading scholar for example places competition for oil and gas as ‘not leading the list’ where rivalry for energy resources would come in fourth or fifth in a list of factors that explain the escalation in tensions (Yang Bojiang, 24/09/2008). An examination of domestic political considerations and popular sentiment in Japan and China prior to 2003 is all the more pertinent when observers appreciate the fact that cool-headed and rational decision-makers in the two states have continuously striven to de-escalate these maritime disputes when incidents

arose and to prevent them from getting out of hand. Given this reality, it seems all the more surprising to see both states become entangled in patterns of public and sometimes hostile posturing to appease domestic actors and audiences such as China condemning Japanese behavior in relation to the Pinnacle Islands as a gross violation of Chinese sovereignty. These incidents tend to oscillate, peak, and recede until the next crisis comes along, where in private, both the Chinese and the Japanese have taken subtle measures to de-escalate tensions such as Beijing carefully managing and restricting anti-Japanese protests in the PRC, and placing key Chinese nationalist figures under house arrest (Downs and Saunders, 1998-1999:120). The private and public ways in which these disputes manifest themselves are an essential component in the dynamics of the ECS problems. Providing the back-drop is important for better understanding these disputes and the more pronounced role of these issues in making bilateral approaches more complicated.

### Chapter Outline

The chapter is divided into two main sections, the first of them beginning by detailing the political and institutional framework in which the authoritarian one-party Chinese leadership operates, makes decisions, and assesses a policy issue. It then discusses the history of the PRC's relationship with Japan with particular emphasis on the post-Tiananmen years (1989) until 2001. This discussion will show how Japan-related issues have affected Chinese domestic politics since the foundation of the PRC in 1949. It will also show how they became increasingly more powerful as a topic in popular and elite

debates during the 1990s as anti-Japanese sentiment increased and as the realities of the country's post-1979 reform era changes and a new international environment began to dig their teeth into China's political, economic, and social life. In this context amid an already complex and often informal political system, the East China Sea islands and demarcation issues, when they escalated again in the mid-1990s, became a much more potent and troublesome problem for the PRC's leaders to successfully manage and deal with without undermining their own standing within the Party and the country.

As with the first, the second main section begins with a description of the political and institutional framework in which politicians in a democratic multi-party Japan operate, make decisions, and assess a policy issue. It then discusses the post-war history of Japan's relationship with the PRC with a special focus on events and developments after the Tiananmen Massacre of 1989 which was regarded by many in Japan (and elsewhere) as a watershed incident in terms of stimulating negative Japanese perceptions of their rising Chinese neighbour. The 1990s are especially apt in discussions of the lead-up to 2003 because these years also witnessed a collection of negative interactions between the two states within an unprecedented international context that amplified the fear of China in Japan. The 1990s was also a decade of major structural changes to Japan's political system that complicated approaches to bilateral problems like the ECS, while Japan's economic and political malaise after the confident highs of the 1980s fed calls for a more assertive and decisive response to security threats in areas near Japan.

# **China**

## **The Political and Institutional System**

The PRC's decision-making processes and political system can be looked at on a number of levels. At one level, it is tempting to simply view the PRC as a state where one party, the CCP, unquestionably dominates political life within a rigid authoritarian and hierarchical structure. If Chinese politics were as straightforward as this, it might suggest that a level-headed leadership can deal with controversies like the ECS with relative ease and without serious repercussions for the elite and the regime. It might also suggest that the government can always positively frame the ECS disputes through its propaganda department without dissent or challenges from within and outside the Party. This view of the PRC's political structure, while true to an extent, is however arguably an oversimplification that doesn't grant adequate respect to the complex, diffuse and often highly competitive nature of Chinese politics (Martin, 2010:2). As argued by Martin:

'The diffusion of political power between the Party and government, and to a lesser degree, to the NPC (the National People's Congress) and the PLA (the People's Liberation Army), can make it a difficult and complex proposition to determine who has authority to set and/or implement specific policies. The dominance of economic players, a proliferation of research groups and other actors in the political system, and the explosion of the Internet and other alternative sources of information have further decentralized policy and administrative processes and diffused power....The political story in China today is the extent to which these

multiple actors and changing circumstances have helped blur the communist regime's lines of authority' (Martin, 2010:2;6).

The PRC's central political framework is based on two inter-related and overlapping institutions. One of these is the extensive, hierarchical and multi-layered CCP with its sixty-six million members and three and a half million organizations. The other inter-linked institution is the state government apparatus. The Party faces an ongoing challenge of maintaining its power in a very fluid and dynamic era over some thirty-four provincial-level governments, over three hundred prefecture-level governments, close to three thousand county-level governments, and over forty thousand township-level governments (Martin, 2010:5;18) in an ethnically diverse country roughly the size of the US but with a population with nearly five times as many people.

In accordance with the PRC's constitution, the National People's Congress (NPC), a unicameral legislative body with close to three thousand deputies<sup>13</sup> meeting over two weeks just once a year, represents the top layer of a system of numerous inter-related People's Congresses that exist throughout the state. The NPC is on paper the most representative and powerful institution in China through which policies are agreed upon and set, and key state leaders chosen. The reality however is that the NPC, despite its constitutional standing, is in fact a politically weak body that down through the decades has effectively rubberstamped decisions already made in secret after much maneuvering

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<sup>13</sup> The NPC is not made up of popularly elected deputies. Rather they are selected to serve five year terms in the NPC by lower level deputies and members of the PLA from other lower level 'people's congresses' from throughout the state (Martin , 2010:9).

and negotiating by more senior Party members in key decision-making bodies such as the Politburo, the Politburo Standing Committee, and the State Council (Martin, 2010:9). On issues as politically sensitive as the East China Sea disputes which incorporate Japan, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, it is the top level individuals within these smaller groups and their immediate affiliate groups that hold the real power and are the final arbiters on government approaches and policies.

For those aspiring to political office or seeking to maintain or strengthen their political standing within this non-democratic system, the dependency on support from below and within means that acquiring the support and loyalty of other political representatives is an essential strategy for one's survival and progression. Within this informal, complex, multi-layered and blurred institutional infrastructure, personal connections play a central but unpredictable role in the decision-making process. This complex structure can also result in a lack of discipline between the various levels of the Party and the government resulting in often unsuccessful attempts by central government to implement policy and also in numerous and sometimes large scale cases of corruption that have damaged the regime's legitimacy (Martin, 2010:4-7).

Given these informal and intimate features of PRC politics, it is not necessarily surprising to learn that factional and bureaucratic politics play a powerful role in decision-making. The importance of behind the scenes maneuvering, manipulation, and compromise, particularly between the top two dozen or so elites in China also sheds some light on why

the decision-making process remains so dynamic, unpredictable, and enigmatic to outside observers. This uncertainty in the decision-making process is especially apparent during periods of political succession from one top leader to the next (Martin, 2010:19). This uncertainty surrounding leadership succession and the consolidation of power by Chinese leaders is particularly relevant to this thesis because of the long history of rivals exploiting Japan-related issues to undermine leaders, and the weight of such matters in the PRC's domestic politics. This was very evident in the context of the 2003 to 2008 period when frictions over the ECS reappeared, peaked and then were carefully stabilized in the midst of more favorable domestic and bilateral political circumstances.

At the highest echelons of Party power is the currently twenty-five member Party Political Bureau (Politburo)<sup>14</sup> and its Standing Committee (PBSC) made up of nine of the Party's most powerful officials. The PBSC is the most powerful formal decision-making body in the PRC. At the apex of this decision-making structure is the top political leader, currently the PRC President and CCP General Secretary Hu Jintao (2002 – Present) (Martin, 2010:4-5). The General Secretary is officially though not always actually the most powerful figure in China. Since the 1990s, a leader is not perceived to have fully consolidated his leadership unless he officially holds three positions. These are a)

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<sup>14</sup> Martin argues that even though the twenty-five member Politburo is officially the top decision-making body in Chinese politics, its cumbersome size and lack of a formalized meeting schedule has meant that the full body is only comprehensively involved when the political stakes are high. Examples of when the entire Politburo might be involved in formulating a decision include issues that require urgent attention, major policy shifts by the Party, or when 'a higher level of legitimization for a particular policy' is required and politically prudent (Martin, 2010:4).

General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, b) President of the PRC and c) Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC). When a new leader assumes his role as General Secretary, the time period needed to assume all the three roles can be a matter of months and years or in some cases never at all. In Hu's case, the three above roles were assumed in the following order, General Secretary (November 2002), President (March 2003), and Chairman of the CMC (September 2004) (*Paramount Leader*, n.d.)

By convention, control of the Party is formally held by the Standing Committee collectively. Members of the Politburo and the PBSC are selected at the National Congress of the Communist Party of China (referred to as the National Congress of the CPC or NCCPC) held every five years (this should not be confused with the National People's Congress (NPC)) (Martin, 2010:4-5). These bodies comprise of powerful figures with their own political and ideological leanings regarding many topical issues such as the course and pace of political and economic reform within China and foreign policy approaches. These dynamics can make for a very competitive game where top leaders must always keep one step ahead of possible rivals within the elite.

As explained by Fewsmith, the Chinese do not have a pleasant history of smooth and peaceful transfers of power. This was even apparent in the years of gradual succession from Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao (in the period from 2002 to 2005) when the ECS frictions resurfaced in 2003, although this gradual transfer was certainly not nearly as tempestuous

as leadership changes in the past. For example, the top elites earmarked to succeed Mao Zedong (1949 – 1976), Liu Shaoqi, Lin Biao, and Hua Goufeng all proved unsuccessful in securing and consolidating their power. Two General Secretaries chosen by Deng Xiaoping, Hu Yaobang (1982 -1987) and Zhao Ziyang (1987-1989) also fell ignominiously by the roadside in the midst of bitter elite power struggles. Another of Deng's protégés, the comparatively less experienced Jiang Zemin (1989 – 2002) however confounded critics and fended off sometimes strong elite competition to hold his grip on power during the often tumultuous and complex post-Tiananmen years and guided China into the new millennium. The PRC's current General Secretary Hu Jintao, scheduled to step down in 2012, has finally consolidated his position as leader of the PRC but not without first having to very delicately and subtly assert his power vis-à-vis the still influential Jiang and his protégés in the first four years after his ascension to the top position in China (Fewsmith, 2008: 239-40).

The other side of the institutional coin, the state government apparatus, is headed by the PRC's Premier, currently Wen Jiabao (2003 – Present), who also presides over the State Council, a type of *de facto* cabinet for the government which is directly elected by and accountable to the National People's Congress (NPC). The State Council, comprising of about fifty members, meets about once a month, and is officially the top government administrative body. Its members consist of the Premier, Vice-Premier, the State Council's secretary general, state councilors, ministers from various ministries and commissions, the governor of the People's Bank of China, and the auditor general of the National Audit Office. The day to day administrative running of the state is dealt with by

a smaller group within the State Council, the State Council's Standing Committee (SCSC) comprised of ten senior members who meet twice a week. According to the PRC's constitution, the State Council is officially subordinate to the NPC but in reality both the State Council and the Politburo Standing Committee are the most powerful groupings in the state. The Party and State apparatuses in China have an inter-linking relationship, where for example Party representatives and committees work in and alongside government agencies, institutions, organizations, universities and foreign-owned enterprises (Martin, 2010:2-7).

Another key institution in China is the People's Liberation Army (PLA) where structurally the lines between military and civilian leadership are often blurred and difficult at times to differentiate (Martin, 2010:2). This has created a lot of unease amongst China's neighbors and the United States in terms of who exactly is in charge of China's military forces and who has the final say with regards to military activities and maneuvers. In the ECS, the absence of positive political relations can strengthen the hand of military elements within the PRC's decision-making elite who support an assertive approach towards Japan. According to Bush, evidence exists that 'the PLA, which wants to preserve as much freedom and flexibility for the navy as possible, has been a key actor behind the scenes in shaping China's tough negotiating position' (Bush, 2009:30). The power of the party leaders to hold rival elements together and speak with one voice in influencing the PLAN is similarly a factor that has affected courses of actions in the ECS. During Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji's (1998-2003) crisis in power in the summer of 2000 for example, Zhu confessed that he was not always aware of PLAN activities in the East

China Sea. Similar evidence of competing interests and factions in the Chinese elite has likewise been discerned in Chinese policy regarding the South China Sea (Buszynski and Sazlan, 2007). These characteristics of the PRC's decision-making system have led to confusion and uncertainty in Japan over the possibility of a reliable, consistent and unified Chinese policy in the East China Sea.

Responsibility for military policy and decisions is granted to two bodies, the Central Military Commission of the PRC (CMCPRC) which is a state body, and the Central Military Commission of the Communist Party (CMCCP) or CMC, a body affiliated to the Party. Both bodies usually consist of the same members who are nominated by the Politburo Standing Committee (Martin, 2010:10). These members include the Party's top leaders as well as senior generals and other key representatives of the PLA's various departments and services (Sutter, 2008:59-60). As such, it is common to refer to the CMC on its own without referring to the state-affiliated CMCPRC. In official terms, the CMCPRC is regarded as the supreme overseer of defense, military and strategic affairs but in actuality it is the Party-controlled CMC that controls and directs the PLA. The CMC is usually though not always presided over by the Party General Secretary (Martin, 2010:10) where elevation to the position of Chairman of the CMC is seen as representative of a leader's standing and political power within the state. Deng Xiaoping, a 'paramount' leader, was for example Chairman of the CMC from 1981 to 1989 even though he was never actually the Party General Secretary and even after he had given up his other party and state positions in 1987. Jiang Zemin likewise remained on as

Chairman of the CMC until September 2004 even though he had stepped down as General Secretary in November 2002 (Shambaugh, 2003).

According to Sutter, there also have been reports of so-called 'Leading Groups' such as the 'Leading Small Group on National Security' within the PRC that overlap with the CMC in order to permit key government, party, and military elements within the state to share their opinions on important foreign policy issues. Such groups also permit the top leader and his circle of advisors to formulate policies that take into consideration the expert advice and interests of the various pillars of the state. Examples of domestic actors who are consulted for their advice through such bodies include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Ministry of Commerce, the *Xinhua* News Agency, the International Liaison Department of the CCP, and figures within the PLA who deal with intelligence, military exchanges, and arms transfers (Sutter, 2008:59-60).

### Elite Politics and Factionalism

The rapid and unrelenting changes that have been a hallmark of the post 1979 reform era and particularly in the post-Tiananmen years have meant the senior decision-makers within the Party have had to deal with a political system with a higher plurality of diverse actors and interests that influence and sometimes dictate policy (Martin, 2010:1). This is within a system where despite these pluralities, the PRC's top leader still plays a varying yet critical role in the informal hierarchy of decision-making elites within central government who shape and influence the PRC's choices in areas such as foreign policy.

The PRC's history has numerous examples of top elites who have seen their star rise or fall depending on how they dealt with key issues. Mao Zedong (1949-1976) (considered to be a first generation leader), Deng Xiaoping (1978-1992) (a second generation leader), Jiang Zemin (1989-2002) (a third generation leader), and now Hu Jintao (2002 – Present) (a fourth generation leader) have all held preeminent positions as the 'key final decision-maker' for extended periods. Hu Jintao's key position as a leader who has successfully navigated through the rough straits of Chinese elite politics for example is exemplified in his current collective role as Communist Party General Secretary, PRC President, and Chairman of the CMC (Sutter, 2008:59).

Competition and rivalry between the PRC's top elites and their factions have been features of political life in China for decades where loyalties can, alongside instrumental considerations, often depend on personal affiliations, historical background and experience, support bases, and nationalistic and ideological credentials. The formation of factions or political coalitions can, at different times, be based on shared perspectives and ideologies (though not always a given), hometowns and political bases, similar educational backgrounds (Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao for example are both from technical backgrounds), political mentorship, and the bonds created over the years. A notable example of a powerful faction in the PRC is the so-called 'Shanghai Clique', a coalition made up of members who had all served as senior officials in the Shanghai municipal government. This clique ascended to a position of great influence under the leadership of Jiang Zemin, who himself had risen to power as a political figure in Shanghai. Another characteristic of political coalitions in China is their unstable nature where rivalry and

alliances can shift depending on the issue at hand. According to Martin, one of the reasons for this instability is the informal character of decision-making which can compel officials to shift their loyalties or else run the risk of losing power and influence (Martin, 2010:20).

The informal and at times uncertain nature of power among the PRC's top elites means that leaders are very sensitive to delicate issues that can easily arouse emotions at the popular and elite level in China. This is especially pertinent to issues that touch directly upon national dignity, territorial integrity, history, and sovereignty that if not tackled appropriately to the given situation could be used to weaken and undermine them. The ECS disagreements are a typical example of such an issue where the figures within the leadership must try to balance between the strategic need for stable relations with Japan and the demands and political necessity of being perceived to be defending the nation's pride and territorial integrity when these are seen to be challenged.

## **Domestic Politics and Japan-related Issues in the PRC**

### **1949 – 1989: A More Easily Manageable Relationship**

Ideational issues such as national identity and historical grievances in relation to Japan and linked topics have been a point of contention in Chinese domestic politics since the foundation of the state. Developments from the late 1980s onwards however have given them added weight and influence. Up until the 1990s, popular sentiment was also more easily guided by central government and was for the most part an issue that factored into

the rivalry for power and influence amongst elites in the CCP. The power of the Party to control and manipulate anti-Japanese propaganda for example was arguably best exemplified by the about face on Japan taken by Beijing that led to the successful normalization of ties with the Sino-Japanese Joint Declaration of 1972.<sup>15</sup> This was followed by a mostly peaceful decade of unprecedented positive political and economic ties between the two neighbours. These developments in terms of public opinion should not be taken to suggest that Japan-related controversies only became important as a domestic political issue in the last twenty years or so. Indeed the theme of resisting Japan has been used, re-used, cultivated and exploited as a valuable card for CCP elites to utilise and bolster their own positions and/or to fend off opponents from the foundation of the PRC right through to the post-reform era and to the present day (Hughes, 2008:250-252).

Indeed, the exploitation of politically sensitive issues such as territorial disputes and so forth by rival elites within the Party, particularly conservative elements, has been used over the years to undermine top level elites and at times ultimately result in their downfall and replacement. The case of Liu Shaoqi, a senior cadre earmarked to eventually succeed Mao Zedong provides one of the earlier lessons on the pitfalls of elite politics in China. Liu was purged and tarred as a ‘capitalist’ traitor in the bitter ideological and elite struggles of the Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976) and was sidelined as a result. When Mao died in 1976, his chosen successor Hua Guofeng

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<sup>15</sup> As observed by Shirk, in the Mao era (1949-1976), Mao had unquestioned power over foreign policy. The normalization of ties in 1972 also saw the Chinese leadership privately forswear any calls for Japanese reparations for its earlier wartime occupation of parts of China and instead sought to emphasize positive future ties (Shirk, 2008:158-159).

(Chairman from 1976 to 1981) took the leadership mantle but his anti-reform stance, inexperience and junior standing in the Party hierarchy proved a handicap that rivals used to undermine him (Fewsmith, 2008:3) in favor of Deng Xiaoping, a progressive and respected Party stalwart of high standing who had survived the darkest days and purges of the Cultural Revolution (*CNN.com*, 2001).

With Mao's passing and the removal of the Gang of Four, senior reformed-minded figures such as Deng stepped up their attempts to move away from the isolation and alienation of earlier years and to show more openness toward the outside world, in particular toward the international economic system (Austin and Harris, 2001:27). By the late 1970s, the new political landscape with Deng as *de facto* leader (ultimately overshadowing Hua) provided him and other supporters of reform with the opportunity to put their country on a path of economic change throughout the Deng era (1978 – 1992) and beyond that reverberates through Chinese life to this day. These reforms centered on so-called 'Deng Xiaoping Theory' with its hybrid mix of socialism and market economics (*Deng Xiaoping Theory*, 2004).

In the strategic and security field, the convergence of China's interests with the US and Japan in the face of a more pressing threat to China from the Soviet Union facilitated stronger ties with the Americans and the Japanese and saw the inclusion of an 'anti-hegemony' clause within the 1978 Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship (Drifte, 2003:23). This political and strategic context through which China viewed the outside

world helped to influence and shape its approach to the ECS disagreements when they became a bilateral issue for the first time in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

### The East China Sea disputes

#### *The First Wave of Protests (1968 – 1979)*

While the Pinnacle Islands dimension of the East China Sea disputes have their origin in the Japanese acquisition of the islands in 1895, shortly before the end of the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), the islands did not become an official matter of dispute between the two countries until decades later. These disagreements over energy and territory first materialized in the late 1960s and early 1970s following a 1968 United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (UNECAFE) sponsored geological survey of the Yellow Sea and the East China Sea. This survey, carried out under the auspices of the Committee for Coordination of Joint Prospecting for Mineral Resources in Asian Offshore Areas (CCJPMRAOA) (Kien-hong Yu, 2005: 117) concluded that ‘the organic matter deposited by the Yellow River and the Yangtze River may make the continental shelf in this region one of the most prolific oil and gas reserves in the world’ (Heflin, 2000:2). China first claimed the islands in May 1970 but did not officially lay claim to them until December 30<sup>th</sup> 1971 after Japan and Taiwan had commenced joint-exploration negotiations for energy resources near the islands, and after the US had agreed to return the Okinawan Islands, together with the Pinnacle Islands, to Japan in 1972.

The year 1972 however also witnessed the PRC's normalization of diplomatic relations with the US and Japan, and so in the interests of good relations, both Beijing and Tokyo sought to play down the islands issue while holding firm to their legal claims. This remained the case in 1978 with the signing of the Sino-Japanese Peace and Friendship Treaty. This scenario, according to Drifte, was problematic because even though two diplomatic agreements were secured (in 1972 and 1978), their price vis-à-vis the ECS was 'sweeping explosive issues under the carpet by agreeing to disagree for the time being' (Drifte, 2008a:3-4). Given the complexities of the Cold War, China's comparatively lesser demand for oil and gas, and China's own problems with the USSR over disputed territories on its western borders, there was also no urgency in the 1970s and 1980s for Beijing to focus too heavily on the energy and territorial issue in the ECS (Wei Su, 2005: 49). By the late 1970s, as a result of the failure to reach agreements on ownership of the disputed islands, the Chinese leadership under Deng, agreed to set aside the islands dispute with Deng stating that 'It does not matter if this question is shelved for some time, say ten years' (Lo, 1989).

The aforementioned Peace and Friendship Treaty of October 1978 also encouraged the two governments not to allow the islands dispute to disrupt the wider relationship even though Japan tacitly rejected Beijing's shelving proposal and instead has consistently denied that any dispute over the islands exists in the first place. Even so, Japanese nationalists displayed their ability to seriously disrupt stable ties with regards to the

islands, when in March 1978, powerful anti-treaty forces and parliamentarians lobbied top-level decision makers to make assertive declarations and to stall treaty talks until a guarantee on the territorial ownership of the islands could be secured. The Chinese responded by sending over one hundred fishing vessels in April 1978 into the territorial waters of the Pinnacle Islands to assert China's claim. This was a prime example of domestic actors and political posturing in Japan setting off a chain of events that resulted in an incident of 'near-crisis proportions' in the East China Sea. In early 1979, when Japanese nationalists started to construct a helicopter landing pad on the largest of the Pinnacle Islands, Beijing reacted by sending fifty fishing boats into the area to re-assert China's claim (Blanchard, 2006: 215-16). Despite both reactions by China representing military statecraft by Beijing to emphasize its resolve to defend its claim (Hagstrom, 2005:178), the incidents fortunately did not escalate beyond this because, amongst other reasons, diplomacy won over force, and intervened to calm the waters.

### **1979 – 1989: Sensible and Pragmatic Relations**

Late 1980 saw the two neighbors engage in negotiations to agree on a border in the East China Sea. Japan argued for a median line solution and presented its proposed median line to the Chinese. Beijing however argued for a boundary based on the natural prolongation of the continental shelf, and negotiations came to naught as a result. Undeterred, China drilled two exploratory wells (*Longjing I* and *Longjing II*) but kept activities well within its side of Japan's median line. Despite this, Japan voiced its protest

so the Chinese subsequently withdrew its rigs and made efforts to convince the Japanese to engage in joint developments in the ECS (Blanchard, 2006: 217).

### Domestic Politics and Japan-related Issues in the PRC in the 1980s

Despite these generally positive ties, the CCP's top brass decided to continue to intermittently play the Japan card in the post-1979 period in order to bolster their legitimacy during this dynamic era of change and uncertainty. A cogent example of a Japan theme being used for political purposes in the 1980s included the manner in which the historical textbook revisions controversy with Japan in the summer of 1982 was presented to the Chinese people (Hughes, 2008:251;256). This was the first time in the post-war years that the issue had arisen and coincided with a Japanese trade mission to Taiwan. When Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone (1982-1987) visited the controversial Yasukuni Shrine in 1985, it hurt but did not destabilise the relationship (Drifte, 2003: 23-27) even though the textbook controversy and the shrine visit triggered student demonstrations in China in 1985. The ability of the top leaders in both states to successfully navigate through these incidents owed much to the deftness of Deng and Nakasone. Both were willing and committed to positive ties and Nakasone had the domestic support in which to make compromises and to formulate gentlemen's agreements aimed to preventing a repetition of such incidents in the future. This was particularly true for a Japan riding high on a wave of economic prosperity and global confidence. When bilateral controversies arose, Deng used his influence and high standing within the Party to quietly and smoothly deal with them before they could get

out of hand. As explained by a Chinese policy advisor, ‘Deng kept it in control, he stopped the fever quickly’ (Shirk, 2008:160-161). On the security front, the early to mid-1980s had seen a reappraisal of the strategic environment by the Chinese marked by a desire for a more independent and non-aligned foreign policy stance and concern over Japan’s defence changes in a period when Japan’s economy and global influence was at its peak (Drifte, 2003: 23-27) and when the Soviet threat had seemingly subsided (Austin and Harris, 2001:17).

In the blurred hierarchy of Chinese politics where a leader’s standing, patriotic credentials and political resume carry great weight, Deng continued to have a major influence on Chinese decision-making even though he never officially held the very top political posts in the PRC, and even after he had formally stepped down from his formal positions of power. In the Deng era he was thus the well-respected yet informal ‘paramount’ leader of the Chinese state (*CNN.com*, 2001). Other formal and official leaders such as Deng protégés Hu Yaobang (1982–1987) and Zhao Ziyang (1987-1989) (toppled after the Tiananmen massacre) failed to consolidate their positions or to stand in Deng’s shadow in terms of influence and stature (Fewsmith, 2008:3). The sequence of events that led to CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang’s fall from power in early 1987 were indicative of the weight of Japan-related issues in the elite competition within the CCP (Hughes, 2008:255). Hu’s Japan-friendly, liberal and reformist leanings had not endeared him to the more conservative and ideologically rigid elements within the Party (Fewsmith, 2008:171).

In 1984, Hu had invited three thousand young Japanese students to visit the PRC and even went as far as hosting Nakasone and his family in his own home during a visit by the Japanese PM. These took place without Hu requesting authorisation from the Party beforehand (Shirk, 2008:163). His uncompromising campaign to tackle corruption in 1986 had also unsettled powerful Party elders who did not appreciate the scrutiny and reprimanding of underlings that accompanied the campaign. This weakened his position and strengthened the calls for his ouster from within the elite (Fewsmith, 2008:171). The pro-democracy student protests of 1985 that developed initially on a pretext of anti-Japanese anger occurred again in 1986 and 1987 and were also used as a stick with which to beat Hu and his domestic and international policies. In this context, Hu could no longer depend on the support of his mentor Deng, who was won over by conservative arguments against him. As Shirk notes, ever since the toppling of Hu, it remains the starkest lesson to date on the pitfalls of Chinese leaders as they attempt to manage the relationship with Japan (Shirk, 2008:162-163). Despite these bumps on the roads, bilateral ties from the late 1970s up to 1989 were for the most part pragmatic and friendly. The Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989 however would mark the first in a long line of incidents that would adversely affect relations between the two neighbours.

### **1989 – 1995: China after Tiananmen - A Dramatic Deterioration in Relations**

Given the vacuum left by the ideological failure of communism so blatantly displayed by the events that culminated in the tragedy of June 1989, alternative ideologies such as

nationalism, in particular nationalist sentiment stirred by anti-American and anti-Japanese attitudes, alongside a sometimes conflicting commitment to economic prosperity, served as an effective tool in cementing political legitimacy by appealing to values shared by both the rulers and the ruled in China (Downs and Saunders, 1998-1999: 118). In addition, it was a convenient means through which Jiang, General Secretary since shortly after Tiananmen, could assert his position in the early 1990s while the aging Deng gradually drifted away from the centre of power. Unprecedented domestic and international changes in this period also witnessed a shift ever since from a generally strong and decisive approach to foreign policy under Mao and Deng to a more cautious and consultative approach to Chinese foreign policy by leaders such as Jiang and later Hu (Sutter, 2008:59).

The years after Mao's passing in 1976 until the present day have been ones in which the PRC's society, politics, culture, and economy has become far more complex and competitive, and inter-twined with the outside world at numerous levels. The Chinese economy for example has more than quadrupled in size (Fewsmith, 2008:4), and the once-omnipotent power of the state and its top elites, though still considerable today, has been challenged by an unprecedented wave of forces at home and abroad. These realities have placed greater demands and constraints on the top leaders, their factions and the legitimacy of the Party (Martin, 2010:1-3). Such changes have made the manageability of sensitive issues like a territorial dispute with Japan all the more difficult.

The 1990s in particular saw the effect of deepening post-1979 reforms become more apparent to all Chinese where these years were marked by rapid economic changes, new thinking about the rising China, and questions about national identity in a new post-Cold War strategic environment that had seen clear divergences amongst the top elite and China's wider society over the most appropriate strategy for driving the nation forward. This uncertainty and dynamism witnessed increased debate at all levels about China's direction from nationalists, traditionalists, conservatives, and utopians. A marked increase in debates over Chinese identity, the course of reform, and the effects of globalization took center stage in intellectual circles and helped to feed the development of a more populist, rather than just an official, strain of nationalism after the early 1990s (Fewsmith, 2008: 1-18;153;221).

#### The East China Sea disputes in the early 1990s

On September 29<sup>th</sup> 1990, the media in Japan reported that the Japanese Maritime Safety Agency (JMSA) was intent on recognizing a controversial lighthouse built in 1978 by nationalists on the main Pinnacle Island as an 'official navigation mark' (*Kyodo*, 29/09/1990). Under intense pressure from abroad and wary of instability from within in the aftermath of the Tiananmen massacre in June 1989, the PRC's leaders strove to balance its nationalistic credentials with its need to rebuild stable ties with its powerful neighbour and to prevent domestic unrest. As a result, China tempered its protests over the ECS in favour of its more pressing economic objectives (Downs and Saunders, 1998-1999: 126-127).

In 1992 Beijing passed the 'Law of the People's Republic of China on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone', re-iterating the PRC's claims to a broad swath of maritime territory in the East and South China Seas and including the Pinnacle Islands, a move that resulted in diplomatic protests from Tokyo. The law also emphasized the right to use force if Chinese sovereignty was threatened or undermined. The 1992 Law was viewed in Japan as China's most explicit move to lay claim to the islands (Hagstrom, 2005:161) and was also seen as a worrying deviation from Deng Xiaoping's 1978 'shelving' proposal (Wu Xinbo (2000)). The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MOFA) China Division regarded it as a 'clear infringement on Japan's sovereignty' (Hagstrom, 2005:166). Hagstrom however plays down the seriousness of this 1992 claim but rather sees it as 'Chinese statecraft' aimed at giving greater legitimacy to China's maritime claims. The more assertive elements of the 1992 law however did indicate the various more hard-line domestic actors that China's more moderate leaders were pressured to consider when drafting it (Hagstrom, 2005:161-174). When Jiang Zemin visited Japan in April 1992, the Japanese PM Kiichi Miyazawa sought clarification about the 1992 Law. Jiang responded by referring to Deng's 1978 'shelving' statement as an indication of China's position (Drifte, 2008b:33). Despite this reassurance, the 1992 Law was seen as one of a number of developments from the early 1990s onwards which fed Japanese concerns about Chinese intentions in neighbouring waters.

### More Challenging Divisions within the Chinese Polity

The dramatic changes wrought by the reform era and the new challenges of the post-Cold War era meant that by the 1990s there was a more salient difference of opinion at the elite and ordinary level between those who prioritized great power status and rising living standards through economic prosperity over other objectives versus those who emphasized conservative Party values and national dignity. A notable political competition developed between those of the Old Left in the Party who espoused Marxist orthodoxy and those reformers who aligned themselves with Deng. The Old Left made concerted efforts to win over the Chinese public and higher level elites for example through the dissemination of numerous publications including the ‘10,000 character manifestos’ (Fewsmith, 2008:14;197).

Along with the Old Left, the period also witnessed a more intense debate in intellectual circles between the so called New Left or neo-conservatives, a large and disparate group who held critical views of both Marxist orthodoxy and Western liberalism and lobbied for a third way between the two approaches, and more liberal-minded reformers. This coincided with the rise of popular nationalism with many elite and ordinary level Chinese questioning the pace and direction of reform (Fewsmith, 2008:13;153;221) and the extent to which the government was undermining traditional values, principles, and national dignity in favor of economic prosperity and financial gain. As with the wider society, many of these contrasting political and intellectual leanings were apparent at the top layer of the Party and government competing with each other in influencing policy.

Uncertainty about the pace of change and reform was furthered by the proliferation in the cases of corruption involving unprecedented sums of money after the early 1990s (Saich, 2004:330) and which illustrated a web of double-dealing between party, government and business figures. Throughout the 1990s, increasing public concerns were also expressed over issues such as higher unemployment in urban areas, and a widening wealth disparity between the rich and the poor and between the Chinese hinterland and the more prosperous coastal regions (Fewsmith, 2008:17). In this dynamic context, the East China Sea disputes represented a convenient proxy through which to attack members of the elite, through which the leadership could exhibit an ostensibly strong position or through which increasingly vocal popular nationalists and intellectuals could express their outrage at government policies.

#### The Role of Popular Sentiment, and Public and Intellectual Opinion

Alongside this growing awareness about the painful reform process and intensified divisions within the elite was a strengthened role for public opinion and popular sentiment in terms of how decision-makers publicly approached sensitive foreign policy issues such as the East China Sea disputes. In contrast to the eras of Mao and Deng where foreign policy issues were discussed in almost complete secrecy and debates over national identity were almost non-existent, the mid-1990s onwards has witnessed a very rigorous discussion at the popular and intellectual levels about national identity-related issues. At the popular level, examples included the best-selling 'China Can Say No' and other books of the same ilk, while at the intellectual level, there was a noticeable increase

in the number of national-identity related articles and books published by scholars in all fields in both scientific journals such as *Dushu* and *Zhanlue yu guanli* and journals from other fields (Esteban, 2006:202). These outlined developments in the PRC granted greater power to public opinion and ideational issues in the domestic political debates within China. As Fewsmith contends with regards to non-democratic states, even though public opinion ‘tends to have very limited repercussions on governmental policies on its own, its impact is much more relevant when it can be mobilized by some of the elites or the sub-elites in favor’ (Fewsmith, 2001). In the case of the PRC, this is particularly relevant because these issues alongside the more visceral dimensions of popular nationalism have been exploited by more conservative, hard-line, and nationalistic elements to increase their leverage and power, and to hinder some important yet controversial reforms that have been pushed by the reformist and technocratic government such as the drawn out fifteen year long negotiations leading to China’s eventual entrance into the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2001 (Esteban, 2006:202). The early to mid 1990s had thus seen a marked increase in the role of public opinion. Even though its influence was still limited, the CCP’s top decision makers had to pay greater attention than previous years to it (Yang, 2006: 136). In relation to the ECS tensions, this development was particularly apparent after the mid-1990s when the 1995-1996 Taiwan Crisis and 1996 Pinnacle Islands’ landings by Japanese nationalists witnessed a strong critical response from popular nationalist groups and intellectuals in China who perceived the leadership’s position was being too soft.

The opening up of intellectual and public debates in the PRC was the product of a number of changes. These included a hitherto underdeveloped marketplace for ideas or a so-called ‘commercialization of culture’ and the existence of a mass and growing audience of middle class Chinese for example interested and willing to purchase books and other sources of information relevant to the key themes of the day, ranging from global events and issues, Chinese nationalism and history and so forth. With this came a dramatic increase in the number of publications that dealt with once taboo subjects and sensitive foreign policy issues which contributed to a much more informed domestic audience. These publications were also utilized by their authors and other interested parties to compel policy-makers to reconsider their views or for policy-makers to defend their decisions and choices. Examples included best-sellers such as the domestically focused ‘Looking at China through a Third Eye’ (1994) and the publication of the aforementioned ‘China Can Say No’ (1996). The latter was characterized by nationalistic anti-Americanism that had experienced a resurgence in the early 1990s evidenced by public opinion polls and book sales but later boosted following the Taiwan Straits crisis of 1995-1996 and the American show of force in the area (Fewsmith, 2008:13-14;148;159-161).

This wave of anti-Americanism in China developed despite the obvious importance of strengthening economic ties with the US. By the mid-1990s, even before the Taiwan crisis, it was clear that many Chinese elites began to see the United States as the principal ‘enemy’ and obstacle to the rise of their country (Sutter, 2008:70). Anti-American sentiment was also fed by the rise in economic nationalism amid the PRC’s greater

openness and cautious embrace of globalization which saw vast amounts of foreign money invested in China with consequent increases in foreign ownership and fears of capitalist entrapment and US hegemony. Jiang and reformists within his government such as Vice Premier Zhu Rongji (1993-1998) and later Premier (1998 – 2003) had to be cautious not to be labeled as being ‘lax on bourgeois liberalization’ by more conservative elements in the elite such as Premier Li Peng (1988 – 1998) who was a major advocate against closer ties with the United States (Fewsmith, 2008:209-214). The East China Sea disputes were one of a number of such sensitive sovereignty related issues that the Chinese leadership had to carefully juggle with and choreograph.

### Conflicting Legitimation Strategies

As mentioned earlier, the global crisis of faith over communism hit home with the regime’s ruthless crushing of the pro-democracy protests of June 1989. This nadir for the CCP compelled them to revisit and focus harder on strategies aimed at strengthening the party’s weakening legitimacy amongst the Chinese people. Their response to their weakened legitimacy after the Tiananmen Massacre was to lure the people back in support of the regime through re-invigorated appeals to economic prosperity and nationalist sentiment. This legitimation strategy however has been a risky one for the Party leadership because the two issues are not always complementary as controversies with Japan such as the ECS disagreements have often shown. The leadership must thus find a delicate balance between utilizing nationalism as a card to prop up the regime and its leaders, moderately appeasing the demands of nationalist sentiment, and attaining

perceptible standards of living that require a stable and prosperous relationship with Japan (Downs and Saunders, 1998-1999: 118;120-21). As argued by Downs and Saunders:

‘the government seeks to shore up its nationalistic credentials through propaganda aimed at a domestic audience while simultaneously sending reassuring messages about China’s desire for international co-operation to foreign audiences. If foreigners challenge China’s nationalistic claims, however, the contradictions between the two legitimation strategies can become evident, and the government may be forced to choose between satisfying popular nationalist demands and pursuing economic performance’ (Downs and Saunders, 1998-1999: 122).

#### A More Concerted Exploitation of Japan-Related Issues

1992 witnessed the commencement of the Patriotic Education Campaign which saw a concerted effort made by the CCP leadership to inculcate the populace with nationalist pride and fervour through the education system and government-directed propaganda campaigns that emphasized the party as the protector of the nation. Examples included the promotion, proliferation and expansion of museums and exhibits that focused on Japanese atrocities in the period from 1931 to 1945, such as the 1937 Nanking Massacre, and the highly publicised marking of anniversaries from the war period aimed at rallying the masses behind the party (*New York Times*, 23/04/1996).

In keeping with its dual strategy the Chinese leadership also saw the political utility of presenting themselves as the ultimate defenders of the nation by publicising details about

controversial history-related issues such as the comfort women issue<sup>16</sup> and dangerous chemical weapons buried and abandoned by the Japanese Imperial Army during the Japanese occupation of China. The comfort women issue appeared on the political radar in 1991-1992 after Japanese historians uncovered documents from the war period that incontrovertibly implicated the Japanese military and state in the controversy (*China Daily*, 16/03/2007). Another sensitive controversy, this time involving stockpiles of abandoned chemical weapons (ACW) was awoken when the Chinese government presented a paper to a 1992 conference on disarmament outlining the extent of abandoned Japanese weapons stockpiles on Chinese territory and the need for considerable financial assistance from Japan to safely remove them. The paper also noted ‘the bitter grievance and serious concern’ among the Chinese people over the ACW controversy (*Chinese Delegation to the Conference on Disarmament*, 18/02/1992). The process of disposal of these munitions by the Japanese commenced for the first time in 1999 (Drifte, 2003:15) but controversy still surrounds this issue.

Despite these problems in the early 1990s, the two governments seemed to be able to navigate through them without allowing them to seriously affect diplomatic relations. This was exemplified by the visit of Japanese Emperor Akihito to the PRC in October 1992, the first such visit ever by a Japanese emperor (Wan, 2006:24). It was likewise apparent that even though the 1992 Law on the Territorial Sea upset a lot of people in Japan, it did not obstruct the attempts of Japan and China to strengthen their diplomatic relations in a period when China was eager to return to the fold after the diplomatic

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<sup>16</sup> This refers to the abduction, false imprisonment, and sexual servitude of between 50,000 to 200,000 predominantly Korean and Chinese women (Soh, 2008:xii). The controversy elicits strong emotions throughout East Asia but particularly from Korea and the PRC.

isolation of the post-Tiananmen years. Indeed, Japan's co-operation in organizing the visit amongst other endeavors in the early nineties did much to help the Chinese to pursue this objective.

Within a few years however, the omens for positive bilateral ties over problems such as the East China Sea did not bode well. In August 1995 for example, the Chinese scrambled a number of their Sukhoi-27 fighter planes to confront Japanese fighter planes in disputed airspace above the Pinnacle Islands (Harrison, 2002:274) On the domestic political front, Jiang sought to consolidate his position and personal authority in the shadow of an aging Deng, and struggled to find the center ground between the more apparent competing left and right wing groups who were pushing and pulling for influence. This required Jiang to define a 'new center' between the different forces of reform, liberalism, conservatism, and nationalism. The Fourth Plenum (Fourth Plenary Session) of the Fourteenth Central Committee that gathered in Beijing on September 25<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> in 1994 saw the symbolic passing of the leadership torch from the Deng era to the 'Third Generation' of Chinese leadership under Jiang, who was eager to secure his authority amongst other elites within the leadership (Fewsmith, 2008:168-69;185;187).

In this context, Jiang launched more major public campaigns in 1995 and 1996 centred on patriotic education and 'spiritual civilisation' that emphasized popular anti-Japanese sentiment and national pride. 1995 witnessed a multitude of government-sponsored events marking the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War and a century since the infamous Treaty of Shimonoseki. Examples included a movie that recreated the Nanking massacre and public exhibitions focusing on past Japanese aggression (Farley,

1995; Tefft, 1995). As contended by Esteban, the product of such nationalist campaigns was arguably greater legitimacy and an improved standing for Jiang and his followers among their peers and the public without negative domestic consequences for the CCP's other source of legitimacy, eudemonic legitimacy or legitimacy based on raising living standards (Esteban, 2006: 185). However, these largely successful efforts by the CCP to stir up nationalist and anti-Japanese sentiment in the years leading up to 1996, along with the renewed tensions over Taiwan and the Pinnacle Islands in this period served to raise the political stakes for domestic actors in China in terms of how they dealt with the ECS disagreements.

From the Chinese perspective, Washington's decision to permit Taiwan's president, Lee Teng-hui, to make a private visit to the US in June 1995 caused deep resentment vis-à-vis the Taiwan issue. It also seemed to represent a reversal of policy on Taiwan by the US and served to discredit Jiang Zemin and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen's policy on Taiwan. It may also have put military hard-liners in the PRC in a stronger position to argue for a more adversarial stand on the issue (Downs and Saunders, 1998-1999: 131-32). By 1996, when the ECS and Taiwan-related disputes shook the relationship to a level unseen in the past, it was apparent that, unlike the 1970s when ECS protests were largely state-managed and controlled, the Chinese leadership had a considerably higher number of factors and players to consider.

## **1996 – 2001: Navigating Tempestuous Waters**

### **Confrontation over Taiwan and the East China Sea**

Chinese animosity toward Japan was strengthened in 1996 by the upgrading of the US-Japan alliance. From the Chinese perspective, this seemed to represent a clear shift away from its passive economics based post-war foreign policy to one that would allow Japan to play a more active security role at both a global and regional level (Downs and Saunders, 1998-1999: 132). Chinese concerns dramatically increased after the Clinton-Hashimoto joint declaration on the bilateral security alliance in April 1996 saw an upgrading of Japan's roles and capabilities in areas such as maritime defence (Yang, 2001:4).

Noteworthy in terms of the ECS disputes, the 1996 declaration specifically mentioned 'situations in areas surrounding Japan that will have an important influence on Japan's peace and security' as a setting in which the US and Japan would co-operate with each other in terms of supplies and services. From Beijing's perspective, Japan's defence changes meant that a once purely defensive Japan has somewhat diluted its traditional post-war policy against the use of force in the absence of a direct attack and were signalling their intention to play a more active and assertive role in regional security. Japanese Self-Defense Force (JSDF) operations, for example, would no longer focus solely on the defence of the Japanese home islands. In a future crisis over issues such as

the contested Pinnacle Islands, and energy resources, such changes would make it difficult for the Japan's armed forces to delineate Japan's defence perimeter (Katzenstein and Okawara, 2001-02:156-159;168).

This evolution in Japanese strategy caused concern in mainland China, at both the public and elite level, and fed suspicions about what they saw as the real reasons behind Japan's defence changes. These followed a tense crisis over Taiwan in the same period (July 25<sup>th</sup> 1995 to March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1996). There were also landings in July 1996 by Japanese nationalists on the Pinnacle Islands when they constructed a lighthouse to assert Japan's claim. The same period saw the disputants ratify UNCLOS and thus set in stone contested EEZ claims to broad maritime territory in the ECS. The frictions surrounding the 1996 incident represented a typical example of where the Chinese leadership had to balance between the two legitimating issues of nationalism and eudemonic legitimacy. The wound to national pride caused by Japanese nationalists laying claim to historically Chinese territory resulted in a strong push within China for decisive action by the CCP leadership and pressure on elites to choose between the two (Downs and Saunders, 1998-1999: 126).

### Domestic Reactions and Pressures

Relations with Japan in regard to such issues are particularly sensitive. As Austin and Harris note, 'Psychologically, Chinese leaders could not let Japan, the former aggressor and brutal occupier, have any edge in such a territorial dispute' where these

disagreements directly touch upon two of the most sensitive subjects in the PRC's foreign policy, the international status of Taiwan and the war with Japan (Austin and Harris, 2001:100). The 1996 landings controversy for example saw as many as 37,000 letters and petitions of in excess of 150,000 signatures being sent to the People's Daily (*Renmin Ribao*) and to the People's Liberation Daily (*Jiefangjun Bao*). All these called upon the government to use force to defend the PRC's claim to the Pinnacle Islands (Lo, 1996b). In the same period, the major military periodicals in the country, the PLA Daily (*Jiefangjun Bao*) and the China Defence News (*Zhongguo Guofang Bao*) contained numerous articles warning that Japanese activities were indicative of a larger conspiracy and condemned the revival of militarism (*Summary of World Broadcasts*, 13/09/1996).

Dissatisfaction over the Party leadership's moderate approach to Japan was also demonstrated within the PLA when a group of 35 army generals reportedly submitted a signed letter to the Party top brass insisting on a tougher stance in the ECS to 'resist Japanese militarism and recapture the Diaoyu Islands, and criticizing the government's relaxed stand on the issue' (Lo, 1996a). CCP officials and military figures also used the opportunity to condemn Foreign Minister Qian Qichen with one Chinese military expert stating that the purpose of exercises carried out by the PLA and PLAN off the Chinese coast near Liaoning Province in September 1996 was not only to warn Japan to be sensitive in the ECS but was also to send an implicit message to 'government officials preoccupied with economic ties to Japan who apparently ignore the nationalist sentiments among soldiers' (*Hong Kong Standard*, 23/09/1996).

In Shanghai, angry residents handed out leaflets and hung up posters that openly condemned the Party for its restrained approach toward the Japanese. Hand-outs entitled ‘What should be the punishment for suppressing the patriotic campaign of protecting the Diaoyu Islands?’ and ‘A true Communist Party should stand by the people who are determined to protect the Diaoyu Islands!’ were sent to district party committees. In this atmosphere, Hu Sheng, President of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), the PRC’s largest research organisation, urged the Party leadership to exercise caution. Hu warned that continuing to restrain anti-Japanese sentiment and to disregard popular calls for a forceful approach to the Pinnacle Islands dispute could result in nationwide unrest with ‘greater trouble than the political turbulence of 1989’ (Lo, 1996a).

By 1996, it was clear that East China Sea related frictions had reached a new level in which once manageable government approaches to ECS disagreements had become more complicated where public and intellectual opinion, though not dictating policies, had become more vociferous and could no longer be easily ignored. The disputes transformed from a bilateral issue once largely confined to diplomats and Party elites to ones where the Chinese public and Chinese intellectuals attached considerable emotional and historical importance to them. It was also apparent that the deeper and ongoing divisions across the political spectrum within the Chinese elite meant that re-awoken disagreements such as those in the ECS represented a useful indirect issue through which rivals could be undermined and weakened. The leadership was likewise very conscious of this and had to walk a tight-rope between two political interests, protecting vital economic relations with Japan and publicly defending the nation’s sovereignty and pride

in ways that allowed protesters to vent their concerns without ultimately threatening domestic stability.

### Balancing and Managing the Domestic Response

Examples of the government's attempts at suppression of public anger over the Pinnacle Islands issue in the interest of positive ties with Japan included a media restriction within the PRC on information relating to contemporaneous anti-Japan protests in Taiwan and Hong Kong. Authorities also clamped down on university computer systems and deleted messages when they learned that over two hundred messages compelling students to take to the streets for anti-Japan demonstrations were circulating on electronic bulletin boards on university campuses (Lam, 1996; Munson, 1996).

Despite the threat to legitimacy posed by suppressing nationalist rage and by brushing aside calls for decisive action from powerful quarters such as the PLA, Party leaders protested assertively at first but then sought to de-escalate the crisis in the interests of economic ties with Japan and to prevent domestic unrest at home (Downs and Saunders, 1998-1999:126;139). As Deans contends, the fact that top decision-makers were able to adopt a moderate approach to the 1996 difficulties despite significant internal pressures would strongly suggest that, by year's end, the more moderate, reformist figures within the CCP elite who sought a more restrained approach to these difficulties were gaining the initiative over more hard-line elements in the ECS debate (Deans, 2000:123). This choice however did not come without consequences, where at home, the leadership's

apparent stand-down on the July landings issue was perceived as weakness against the Japanese in defending the nation's sovereignty and honour. This had a negative impact on the regime's legitimacy with numerous Chinese actors accusing Jiang of being unpatriotic and illegitimate (Downs and Saunders, 1998-1999: 126;131).

The Chinese authorities had been successful for the most part in preventing damage to economic ties with Japan over the incident, and in restraining large scale anti-Japanese protests after the 1996 landings. In areas outside the control of the CCP however such as Taiwan and Hong Kong, and in cities of North America where large Chinese communities resided, widespread anti-Japanese sentiment and anger over the 1996 landings were evidenced in the sheer scale of the demonstrations with some 50,000 protesters on the streets of Hong Kong and over 20,000 in Vancouver (Chang, 2001:212).

By the mid-1990s, it had become apparent that one of the great paradoxes of the education and media initiatives begun by Jiang in early 1990s was that while they served to politically strengthen him, they also increasingly served to make him more vulnerable to attack as a result of the conflict between official and popular nationalism, and from Party rivals, hard-liners, grass-roots organizations and the Chinese public. The Patriotic Education Campaign and accompanying media campaigns for example with its very negative spin on what was understood to be the US quest for hegemony, and the cruelty of the Japanese during the War of Resistance (1931 to 1945) sowed the seeds for more assertive and aggressive forms of nationalism that would bear more heavily than previous

years on the shoulders of the CCP elite by the mid-1990s (Esteban, 2006: 185;199). For Jiang, the precarious balancing act between pursuing economic development and not being labeled a traitor by exponents of these nationalisms and/or political rivals was manifested in the ambiguity shown by him in his reactions to pressures for a harder line from hawks within the party, the PLA, and sectors of the PRC's urban population with regards to numerous incidents. These included examples such as the Taiwan Crisis of 1995-96, the July 1996 Pinnacle Islands landings, and the later 1999 Belgrade embassy bombing and 2001 Hainan US spy plane incidents (Esteban, 2006: 185).

#### Balancing and Managing the Relationship with Japan after 1996

The economic crisis that troubled the North-east Asian region in 1997 and 1998 focused Chinese and Japanese leaders' eyes and their publics even closer on their own domestic problems. This situation no doubt made problems with their most powerful neighbor a useful distraction from economic difficulties on the home front (Sutter, 2008:235). Sino-Japanese diplomatic ties however still remained resilient in spite of the countless developments that severely tested them. In the security field for example, the new defense guidelines which incorporated Theatre Missile Defence (TMD) that Japan agreed to with the US in September 1997 evoked strong protests from the Chinese during Prime Minister Hashimoto's trip to China in the same month. The Chinese feared that the Japanese might use the guidelines to strengthen their military capabilities and protect Taiwan under the TMD system in a security arrangement hostile to their interests. Despite these problems, both countries displayed their ability to overcome difficulties in other areas with the successful completion of a Fisheries agreement in the East China Sea

in November 1997. The two governments also did not allow numerous disagreements to obstruct the general continuation of visits by high level figures from both states for most of the 1990s (Wan, 2006:14-15;37).

Such visits are arguably one of the best signs of a commitment to improving ties. By 1998, while there was scant evidence of harmony between the two neighbors, they nevertheless still managed to make some progress on a number of regional and global security issues as the aforementioned 1997 Fisheries agreement (involving joint regulation and fishing zones) and the February 2001 prior notification agreement in relation to scientific research activities (Valencia and Amae, 2003:189). The Chinese had temporarily cancelled formal talks due to the difficulties caused by Japan's defense upgrades but the relationship still moved in a forward trajectory with both committed to developing the institutional framework of their security dialogues (Austin and Harris, 2001:116). While ties were not necessarily smooth, they did all the same exhibit a public willingness by the PRC to keep channels open, to strengthen ties, and to sincerely attempt in a spirit of good will to resolve problems like those witnessed in the East China Sea. These features would be severely tested in the 2003 to 2006 period.

#### Leadership Balancing Strategy – Some High Profile Post-1996 Incidents

President Jiang's position was arguably strengthened somewhat in March 1998 when the conservative Li Peng was replaced as Premier by economics-focused and reform-minded Zhu Rongji (Fewsmith, 2008:214). A November 1998 CASS poll however showed that 82% of Chinese people were dissatisfied with the government's 'weak' policies and

approaches towards Japan on a number of sensitive nationalistic issues such as war damages, the upgraded US-Japan alliance, and the resurgent Pinnacle Islands issue (Fewsmith and Rosen, 2001). Given such sentiment and its potential utility by political opponents, Jiang was very careful when dealing with controversies in which he might be side-stepped politically or labeled a traitor. An ostensibly assertive stance on all issues related to territorial sovereignty, national pride and particularly Japan was thus a political must. Jiang even went as far as to commandeer many of the sensitive mid-1990s issues for himself in order to bolster his political position within the Party and to present himself as the person best suited to defend China's dignity and pride. The most glaring example of this was his highly publicized behavior during his visit to Japan in November 1998. This was the first time ever that a PRC head of state visited Japan (Hughes, 2008:262).

In what should have been a visit that represented positive ties between the two states, Jiang's visit was marred by his insistence on a formal apology for Japan's past behavior in China. This followed a formal apology to South Korea by the Japanese government for its colonial record on the Korean peninsula. When no such apology followed for China, Jiang used the visit to issue a series of harsh rebukes. On one occasion, Jiang even attacked Japan's war record in front of Emperor Akihito. This received widespread coverage from the Japanese media and left many Japanese feeling bitter. From the Chinese public's point of view, the refusal by Japan to formally apologize for the war during the state visit, only served to further anger and offend ordinary and elite level Chinese (Seig, 2008). Given criticisms on the home front over Japan and other issues, it could be postulated that Jiang's assertiveness was part of a strategy aimed at bolstering

his domestic position and scoring a diplomatic coup by securing an apology or at least publicly castigating the Japanese. As observed succinctly by Shirk, ‘Jiang Zemin’s disastrous state visit to Japan in 1998 exemplified his domestically oriented approach’ (Shirk, 2008:166). As discussed later in the section on Japan, Jiang’s visit would have an adverse effect on those in Japan arguing for a moderate line vis-à-vis China in areas like the East China Sea.

When US-led NATO forces accidentally bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, Serbia on May 7<sup>th</sup> 1999, such was the deep anger felt at all levels that the Party leadership had to tread very delicately, presenting a tough face publicly while not going too far to encourage domestic unrest or to seriously damage ties with the US. Despite this, the response taken by the government to this insult to national pride was widely viewed as too soft and inadequate in a context where more hard-line elements were calling for a commercial boycott and even military retaliation. This balancing act was exemplified by the manner in which the government sought to carefully manage the resultant protests rather than suppress them entirely. In Beijing for example, the government set aside buses destined for the US embassy so that protesting Peking University students could vent their anger in a controlled manner without encountering other non-student protesters and marching into central Beijing as had happened in the lead-up to the Tiananmen protests of 1989 (Esteban, 2006: 203-205).

While the government was largely successful in subduing nationalist protests, the shared perception of weakness by the Party leadership was latched onto by leftists to strengthen

their position and influence, and subsequently to undermine technocratic figures within the Party. One of the most notable examples was the undermining of Premier Zhu Rongji and the delaying of some key government policies such as the PRC's aforementioned planned accession to the WTO (Fewsmith, 1999). Zhu's association with the stalled WTO negotiations in April 1999 (which had been started in 1986) and then the Belgrade bombing a month later saw him vilified by the public as expressed through various outlets. Student protesters and internet articles for examples excoriated him as a 'traitor' (*maiguozei*). The death of Deng in February 1997 had also left Jiang and Zhu, Deng protégés, more vulnerable to attack from other elites. Fewsmith for example noted how older Party cadres were heard to draw comparisons between the government's approaches to globalization with the traitor Wang Jing-wei in his role as the head of Japan's puppet government in occupied China. Other elders argued that Zhu's compromises with Washington during the WTO negotiations were akin to a more modern version of the infamous twenty-one demands in 1915 by the Japanese with which they aimed to reduce China to the status of a colony under their rule. The tensions wrought from the WTO and embassy bombing controversies marked the most serious rift in Chinese elite politics since Deng's passing less than three years earlier. The volatile events of 1999 on the domestic political level in China were very significant for issues such as the East China Sea for a number of reasons. Most notably, the reaction to these issues was 'extraordinary because it was the first time since 1949 that elite politics, bureaucratic interests, intellectual opinion, and broader (but still urban) public opinion came together to oppose the official position on an important foreign policy issue.' By the decade's end, the centrality of all these issues in Chinese domestic politics suggested

some very significant changes in the political system (Fewsmith, 2008:197-198; 219-221).

### Lessons Learned by Leadership

By the end of the decade, both the outside world and the CCP had witnessed a number of worrisome incidents since the mid-1990s that illustrated how the Chinese public can act in response to any perceived slight or humiliation by a foreign power. For fear of undermining regime legitimacy by being seen as aloof from the concerns of the people and to maintain their standing within the leadership, Party decision-makers have had to find an increasingly precarious balance between pragmatic foreign policy decisions, and making concessions to popular nationalistic sentiment (Zheng, 2006:4). China's policy-makers and leaders had also come to a greater appreciation of how popular rather than state-backed official nationalism in a more opened and pluralistic China has a greater destabilizing influence on leaders, domestic stability, and can distract decision-makers from their preferred course in the pursuit of the state's interests. Writing in 1999, Zheng argued that the CCP leadership had come to understand how important it was not to allow popular nationalism to get in the way of foreign policy decisions or trouble domestic stability. Three core reasons lay at the heart of this understanding. One was that 'the complicated nature of popular nationalism made it difficult for the government to predict potential consequences.' For example, nationalistic protests could quickly turn into protests about domestic problems. The second was that such mass protests would not fit into central government's priority of political stability. Third, Beijing appreciated the

over-riding importance of stable bilateral ties for the PRC's domestic development (Zheng, 1999:134).

By the end of the 1990s then, the Party leadership came to appreciate, for domestic and international reasons, the importance of avoiding serious nationalistic controversies where possible. The 1998 Jiang visit to Japan for example convinced many Chinese elites that the PRC needed to put relations back on a track that prioritized co-operation with Tokyo on a wide range of issues. Despite Jiang's initial intransigence to tone down his history-related rhetoric, by the turn of the century, members of the CCP's 'Leading Group on Foreign Affairs' (which was headed by Jiang) had persuaded him to permit the Foreign Ministry to try a more pragmatic approach to Japan (Shirk, 2008:167). When Taiwanese opposition member Chen Shui-bian from the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was elected President of Taiwan in 2000, it represented a possible nightmare scenario for China's leaders on the home front. Beijing's reaction however suggested that they had learned some valuable lessons from the 1995-1996 crisis over Taiwan. As Saich observes 'while Beijing's rhetoric was loud and harsh, its actions were more calculated and a 'wait-and-see' attitude prevailed' (Saich, 2004:316).

As mentioned earlier, the years prior to the resurgence of the East China Sea disputes in 2003 had also seen some positive bilateral movement being made in terms of conflict prevention agreements such as the February 2001 prior notification agreement in relation to scientific research activities (Valencia and Amae, 2003:189) being formulated with limited success to minimize tensions in the area. Challenges persisted of course with

incidents such as downing of a USAF EP3 reconnaissance plane over Hainan Island on April 1<sup>st</sup> 2001 and the December 2001 sinking of a North Korean spy ship by Japan inside China's EEZ (Wei Su, 2005: 45-46). These incidents also injected vitality into the lingering question of rights of entry in the water and in the air near coastal areas (Valencia and Ji, 2002:723).

### Perceived Negative Gestures from Japan

When Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi assumed office in April 2001, the PRC leadership strove to prioritize the pursuit of economic development and avoid the type of controversies that had dogged ties in the 1990s. However, caution over possible charges of weakness or even treason from other elites and the general public should a serious controversy arise remained in the back of the minds of Party leaders. Despite this scenario for possible positive relations from China's perspective, Wan argues that in the weeks just prior to Koizumi's election as leader in April 2001, the Japanese were guilty of seriously affecting goodwill towards Japan in China by putting history and the Taiwan issue back on the bilateral agenda. Examples included the April 3<sup>rd</sup> decision by Tokyo to accept a controversial junior high school textbook that downplayed Japan's wartime behavior, a decision that led to South Korea recalling its ambassador to Japan, and Beijing officially protesting against the move. April 22<sup>nd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> also saw the visit to Japan of former president to Taiwan Lee Teng-hui in spite of China's diplomatic attempts to pressure the Japanese to block the visit. Beijing's riposte to this snub was to call off the

scheduled visit to Japan by the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC) Li Peng in May. According to Wan, this cancellation was in fact a quite weak response when one considers the strong language used by the Chinese prior to the cancellation (Wan, 2006:26-27). When Koizumi made the first of a number of highly controversial visits to the Yasukuni shrine on August 13<sup>th</sup> 2001, the Chinese ambassador to Japan Wu Dawei warned the Japanese press on August 31<sup>st</sup> that bilateral ties were experiencing their 'toughest situation' since the normalization of ties in 1972 because of the hindrance caused by the shrine visits and the history textbook issue to better relations (*China Daily*, 01/09/2001). The Chinese also suspended bilateral security talks after the first visit and did not resume them until March the following year (Wan, 2006:38). This shrine visits issue would be one of the principal reasons for the deterioration in ties after 2001 and had an indirect but adverse effect on how the resurgent post-2002 ECS disagreements were approached and dealt with.

By the onset of the Koizumi years (2001 to 2006), it was lamentable to see a relationship that held so much potential and offered so many opportunities descend into hitherto the worst relations of the post-normalization era. The 1970s and the 1980s for example had seen unprecedented political and economic progress in the relationship despite the occasional but manageable challenge. The 1990s back-drop to the nadir of the Koizumi years provides some telling insights into the factors that served to significantly complicate the ways in which the Chinese leadership for example could deal with the East China Sea problems. One of the most important deviations from earlier years was the more difficult manageability of the disputes and the greater plurality of players and factors which could no longer be easily ignored or set aside without potentially negative

consequences for the legitimacy and power of China's decision-makers. As discussed in the next section, the Japanese also had to adjust to new realities and a more numerous and diverse set of interests after 1989 that directly impinged on how Japanese politicians approached the once manageable ECS disputes in the new millennium.

## **Japan**

### The Political and Institutional System

Japan's political system and constitution is modeled along the lines of a British-style multi-party parliamentary democracy or constitutional monarchy with the Emperor acting as the symbolic head of state under strict guidelines. This system consists of a national parliament made up of two houses which have legislative power, the lower House of Representatives and the upper House of Councilors. These two houses make up the bicameral legislature in Japan (often referred to as the National Diet) where parliamentarians from both houses are elected by the public at nationwide elections. Elected parliamentarians have the power to choose Japan's Prime Minister (PM) through parliamentary vote. The Prime Minister is by convention the President of his party and as PM the leading political figure in Japan (Cooney, 2007:21).

1945 – 1993: Domestic Politics under the ‘1955 System’

Since the end of the US occupation of Japan in 1952 until the early 1990s, Japanese party politics were characterized by the largely unrivalled dominance of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) of Japan (*Politics of Japan*, 2010). Under the so-called ‘1955 System’, (from 1955 when the LDP was founded until 1993 when electoral reforms were implemented), the LDP held a safe and uncontested single majority of the parliamentary seats in the Diet. In this era, lobbying and political power were closely tied to an intra-party faction (*habatsu*) system within the LDP which worked alongside a system of often informal and intimate networks and institutions (Kato, 2009). The formation and maintenance of powerful factions by leading LDP politicians created a highly decentralized party in which these factions jockeyed with each other for influence and power. The largest factions were instrumental in securing majority coalitions in the process of selecting LDP Presidents and consequently Prime Ministers. The *quid pro quo* for support often involved the largest faction securing the key LDP secretary-general position which meant virtual control over party affairs. This decentralization of power resulted in a dual power structure where politics was regularly characterized by a weak Prime Ministry (where PMs were often their faction’s leader) propped up by strong factions around them (Cooney, 2007:87). Over the decades, the factions have included ‘mainstream’ factions positioned near the power center and peripheral ‘anti-mainstream’ factions who aspired to central political power. Since the 1970s, the ‘mainstream’

factions have included the most powerful Tanaka faction, and later the Takeshita, Obuchi, and Hashimoto factions (Green, 2003:55).

One of the consequences of this decentralized system was that various Japanese PMs and the party found it difficult to step outside the remit of the Yoshida Doctrine with its emphasis on economic recovery, minimal military rearmament, and a close alliance with the United States, and were restricted from taking decisive steps in foreign policy or formulating an alternative foreign policy strategy for the future (Green, 2003:11;37). After the East China Sea problems arose for the first time in the late 1960s, and until the 1990s, the ECS strategy options open to Japan under its pre-1993 system were arguably quite passive, manageable, consistent and predictable. Now however Japanese approaches while still generally consistent have become more challenging to quietly manage, more prone to the whims and predilections of individual leaders and politicians, and more assertive in dealing with Chinese vessels in the area.

Before electoral reforms in 1993, the House of Representatives' electoral system meant that, in order to guarantee a majority in the Diet, the dominant LDP had to secure multiple seats within each constituency (Kato, 2009). The existence of between three to five seats in each constituency meant that the LDP would select numerous candidates for each one. Success at elections was heavily reliant on a candidate's faction and its available funds and influence (Cooney, 2007:87). The quest for political power and rivalry for key posts therefore was focused mostly on intra-party rather than inter-party

competition between factions within each of these voting districts. These factions were instrumental in lobbying central government for political funds and in securing important positions for faction members (Kato, 2009).

This system contributed to a politics marked by fierce rivalry between the various factions but also served to stabilize the process of governing by encouraging faction members to conform to the dictates of central government or their own faction where often the two were two sides of the same coin. The faction system thus helped the LDP to control and co-ordinate the activities of the party as a whole. Whenever an important issue arose that required the support of the wider party in advance of the implementation of policy, negotiating and bartering with faction leaders was key strategy in order to ensure compliance and conformity. As long as influential faction leaders could be won over, they in turn would seek most if not all faction members to accept the directive and then matters could usually be dealt without major problems. Recalcitrant members and individual backbenchers could be weakened and marginalized by such a process and the risk of a major revolt significantly lessened. Kato cites the example of the introduction of consumption tax in 1989 in the face of staunch opposition from within the LDP because the key faction leaders worked together to see the proposals through and to fend off protests from the backbenches (Kato, 2009). This also would have applied to the manageability of government policies toward issues like the East China Sea under the 1955-1993 system.

At the economic level, political, bureaucratic, and business links were maintained under the 1955 system through the 'zoku' (tribe or interest group) relationship in which powerful politicians who were members of these various 'zoku' lobbied government on their behalf. This 'iron triangle' linkage between politics, bureaucracy and business saw the presence of 'zoku' within the various ministries building close and long-term relationships, rubbing shoulders with bureaucrats, and generally doing their best to co-ordinate political with economic interests for their 'zoku' (Kato, 2009). As discussed later, by the late 1990s the reform of Japan's bureaucracy amid numerous scandals within the various ministries resulted in some seminal bureaucratic changes that adversely affected the traditional *modus operandi* towards China and the East China Sea disagreements.

### 1993 – Present: The Demise of the '1955 System'

The bursting of Japan's economic bubble in the late 1980s and early 1990s sparked public anger at these informal, secretive, and potentially corrupt systems of bureaucracy and politics. After decades under this arrangement and following some high profile corruption scandals, Japanese citizens had grown weary of the 1955 system and began to blame it for their economic ills, and supported calls for radical reforms that would ensure greater openness and formality within their political system. The opportunity for this arose in 1993 when Morihiro Hosokawa (1993-1994) was elected the first non-LDP Prime Minister of Japan since 1955 during which time he implemented political reforms that were to have a lasting effect on post-1993 politics in Japan (Kato, 2009). The most

striking product of these changes was the weakening of Japan's faction system (Cooney, 2007:87-88). Hosokawa's success in ending decades of unchallenged LDP dominance and enacting the reform process rested in pulling together an unlikely and disparate eight-party coalition of smaller non-LDP groups in 1993 that had had enough of empty LDP promises about reform (Green, 2003:18). Since the 1993 reforms and Hosokawa's short reign (1993-1994), the LDP held on to power but only through coalitions with other parties.

As Green argues, the days of single majority LDP rule are gone due to a number of reasons. These include the post-1993 electoral changes, new post-Cold War challenges that were far removed from the purely anti-communist and pro-economic growth strategies of earlier years, as well as the unavoidable realities of coalition politics. In addition, LDP dominance has been undermined by the development of a credible opposition with the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) which increased its seats from thirty-two seats to one hundred and twenty-seven in the 2000 elections. The Japanese bureaucracy was also shaken by numerous scandals and poor opinion ratings by both public and media, and the rise of a more liberal minded and affluent society has witnessed a more politically diverse and less passive electorate (Green, 2003:49). The 1990s also saw the bureaucracy being targeted for change and criticism with many of the government's ministries undergoing major reforms. These shifts had a negative effect on the co-ordination between the political and bureaucratic systems (Kato, 2009).

Post-1993 Japanese politics were marked by political realignment and change where even though many of the old ways persisted, the political factions and *zoku* within Japan suffered from a loss of cohesion and discipline and where the LDP though still powerful no longer had the monopoly on policymaking and policy expertise (Green, 2003:49). Factions remain important in terms of government stability and assigning politicians to key posts. Factional influence over the PM however has been watered down and the balance of power has thus shifted. A key reason for this was that electoral reforms witnessed a change from the old multi-seat per district system to one where only one candidate prevails. The old system would often see constituents petition and make requests to the more senior and powerful LDP parliamentarians within a multi-seat district (Cooney, 2007:88). This ensured a hierarchy between older politicians with long-held links to their faction and new Diet members aspiring to climb up the political ladder.

Under the new single-seat system the sole representative for a district (regardless of age and experience) now deals with practically all of his or her constituents' requests, and no longer stands below older LDP members. This more equal footing for all Diet members has removed the constraints on younger Diet members to criticize the Party leadership and Party elders. Since the 1990s, many younger parliamentarians have taken advantage of this to castigate older LDP members and mock their policies (Cooney, 2007:88). Since the mid-1990s in particular, the East China Sea has been one such issue used by both government and opposition politicians to criticize the Prime Minister and his cabinet or has been adopted by some decision-making Japanese politicians to display their patriotic credentials to their voting public.

In the days of the multi-seat system, if a younger Diet member stepped out of line, a powerful faction could smother such criticism by threatening to nominate and support a new rival candidate in elections in his or her constituency. When the post-1993 electoral reforms kicked in however such threats were removed from the arsenal of the factions and elder Party members because no LDP candidate is permitted to challenge an incumbent Diet member. A notable example of this new difficulty for the Party leadership was in 2000 when Taro Kono (first elected as a Diet member in 1996) publicly condemned and demanded the resignation of a Party stalwart and secretary-general Hiromu Nonaka after the LDP's loss of numerous seats in nationwide elections (Cooney, 2007:88). Since the mid-1990s, recalcitrant LDP parliamentarians have also used the more virulent and diverse Japanese media to denigrate and denounce the policies of the Party leadership (Kato, 2009).

### *The Japanese Media in the 1990s*

The influence of the Japanese media since the 1990s in affecting the Japanese public's perceptions of China and in propelling China-related issues to the top of the political agenda should not be underestimated. Green for example observes that most newspapers within Japan's mass media have increased their focus on both security and Asian issues. Daily newspapers such as the largest circulation paper, the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, and the *Sankei Shimbun* have always been of the conservative and pro-defense ilk. However, other papers such as the *Asahi Shimbun*, mainly one of the government's strongest critics

on the Left have also been highlighting the dangers of Chinese and North Korean behaviour 'often with a dose of sensationalism and nationalism'. More conservative newspapers such as the *Sankei Shimbun* have regularly played up the issue of incursions into Japan's EEZ and have thus helped to amplify the impression of a belligerent China that had already been developing due to other negative issues such as Chinese nuclear testing in 1995, and Beijing's protesting of Japanese attempts to raise its profile in the UN in 2004-05 (Green, 2003:69;85).

Since the 1990s, some Japanese politicians and the mass media have argued that an arms race and unstable factors had appeared and that China was undertaking a military build-up and territorial expansion and thus was a new threat to peace and stability in Asia. The *Yomiuri Shimbun*, for example, claimed that China's military reinforcement constituted 'a threat to the international community' and urged China to 'exercise restraint' (Yang, 2001:14). The media therefore, according to Green, has played an even greater part in magnifying the external shocks and pressures over problems like the East China Sea that the Japanese system has felt since the end of the Cold War (Green, 2003:69).

By the mid-1990s on the Japanese domestic front, politicians and media commentators had become less optimistic about China's intentions. Leading Japanese newspapers in this period were carrying expressions of new concern, with views that China is now undertaking a 'military buildup' and 'territorial expansion', forming a new 'threat' in Asia and that 'China's twenty-first century naval hegemony strategy will threaten Japan's life-line for international trade' (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, 15/04/1993). Due to the increasing

widespread public perception in Japan of a nationalistic and potentially aggressive China in areas like the ECS, and the resultant consequences of this, the Japanese government has had to carefully handle its own nationalist groups for numerous reasons. Soderberg highlights this link between media pressure and nationalistic pressures in Japan when she argues that sensitive nationalistic issues such as the rise of China are played up by the Japanese mass media and are being used by certain groups to pressure the government to make changes in Japan's defense posture (Soderberg, 2005: 63).

## **Domestic Politics and China-related Issues in the Japan**

### **1945 – 1989: Stable Management, Unrivalled Power**

In the post-war decades prior to the 1990s, Japan and China were largely alienated from each other by the 'Bamboo Curtain' where the relationship was irregular because economic relations were the norm but where limited political contact took place (Wang, 2006:2). From the founding of the PRC in 1949 until the normalization of ties with the US and Japan in the early 1970s, China's position as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and a founding member of the United Nations (UN) was taken up by the US-backed post-civil war nationalist Chinese government in Taiwan. In this context, Japan's approaches to the PRC were ones that tended to develop economic links but adhered closely to the objectives of its ally, the US, including obstructing diplomatic attempts to replace Taiwan with the PRC as a top player in the

UN. The upheaval caused by the Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976) in the PRC also seemed to confirm US and Japanese preconceptions that the communist China was a state dogged by xenophobia, domestic instability and uncertainty (Austin and Harris, 2001:13;27).

### Approaches to the East China Sea in the 1970s

Despite this, the period also witnessed the convergence of China's strategic interests with those of the US and Japan in the context of the Sino-Soviet split, particularly in the late 1960s, which meant that both Japan's economic and security interests with regards to the PRC were positioned within the same framework so no structural conflicts existed vis-à-vis Japan and China's strategic options (Wang, 2006:2). This convergence of interests was symbolized by the normalization of diplomatic ties in 1972 and then the 1978 Sino-Japanese Peace and Friendship Treaty where issues such as the Pinnacle Islands disputes were swept under the carpet in the interests of more pressing economic and strategic interests (Drifte, 2008a:3-4).

While the Pinnacle Islands issue was largely put aside in 1978 in the interests of stable bilateral ties, Japan and South Korea had as early as 1974 drafted a demarcation agreement 'concerning the Establishment of Boundary in the Northern Part of the Continental Shelf Adjacent to the Two Countries' and an agreement 'concerning the Joint Development of the Southern Part of the Continental Shelf Adjacent to the Two

Countries.’ These were agreements to which the PRC strongly objected without stating any specific territorial claim of its own. In response to China’s protests, Tokyo put off ratification of these agreements until June 1978 when it nonetheless proceeded to ratify them despite Beijing’s stated disapproval (Drifte, 2008a:5-6).

### Sturdy Diplomatic and Economic Ties

At the time of the normalization of ties, Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka (1972-74) set up an informal network of contacts with key Chinese elites. From the time he stepped down in 1974 until his death in 1993 Tanaka continued to hold a considerable and positive behind the scenes influence on ties through the powerful Tanaka faction, Japan’s largest political faction. A future Japanese Prime Minister, Noboru Takeshita (1987-1989) succeeded Tanaka as head of this faction and continued to exert a positive influence after his premiership ended up until his passing in 2000 (Self, 2002:78). This view is supported by Watanabe when he notes that Japanese diplomacy in the 1970s, 1980s and even most of the 1990s was largely stable in a structural sense despite the dynamic atmosphere, and was led by moderate pragmatists in the form of the dominant Tanaka faction who were pro-China pragmatists (Tsuneo Watanabe, 27/10/2008).

One of the most significant aspects of the improvement in bilateral ties in the 1970s was the commencement in April 1980 of Official Development Assistance (ODA) incorporating grant aid and technical assistance from Japan to assist in China’s growth

and development. The importance of this in boosting the PRC's economic development should not be understated. Indeed the fact that so many Chinese appear to be unaware of or at least ungrateful for this assistance has been an issue that would later touch upon Japanese sensitivities over Beijing-backed anti-Japanese campaigns and promotions in the 1990s. To emphasize this, one needs to remember that for most if not all of the last thirty years of China's opening up to the outside world, Japan was the largest donor to China representing some sixty percent of all the aid that the PRC received from other states. China also received more ODA than any other nation assisted by Japan where many of China's large scale constructions were funded via Japanese ODA and Yen loans. This often unacknowledged assistance by Japan to its neighbor played an instrumental role in raising the living standards of millions of Chinese and in their social and economic development (Wu, 2008:1).

Commenting on some of the key differences between earlier years and bilateral ties at the turn of the century, Murata notes the divergences between Japan under Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone (1982-1987) in the 1980s and Japan under Koizumi after 2000. Murata argues that despite former Prime Minister Nakasone's visits to the Yasukuni shrine in 1985, he enjoyed a very close relationship with the Chinese leadership in the 1980s. The Japanese economy was also at its strongest ever at that time, the Japanese people were full of self-confidence, and therefore the Japanese leadership and public felt able to compromise over historical issues such as the Yasukuni Shrine (Koji Murata, 12/11/2008). Nakasone was also quick in addressing China's concerns, was very strategic about China, and recognised its importance to Japan's interests. Nakasone knew that he

had to weigh domestic concerns with compromise with China, and this was the biggest difference between then and the later 2001 to 2006 ice age period in Japan-China relations (Yoshihide Soeya, 25/11/2008). This helped when dealing with other sensitive issues of the era such as the history textbook controversy (commencing in the early 1980s), Nakasone's aforementioned visit to the Yasukuni shrine in 1985, the Kyoto dormitory (*Kokaryo/ Guanghualiao*) legal ownership debate (from 1977 to 1987) (Drifte, 2003) and the strategic concerns that arose in the 1980s.

As argued by Wan, another key difference between earlier years and the outset of serious tensions during the Koizumi years for example was that the political leadership and government officials in both states 'were emotionally committed to a friendly bilateral relationship' and 'skillfully managed the tensions (of earlier years) to keep relations on track' (Wan, 2006:2). One of the combined effects of the domestic structural political changes of the 1990s and those enacted in the Koizumi era (2001 to 2006) was that contentious issues such as the shrine visits and the ECS disputes, which normally would have been dealt with by government officials, were by 2003 left without a braking mechanism. When the Tanaka faction was the most powerful faction in Japanese politics, and when some issues arose, such as PM Nakasone's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine in 1985, or a history textbook controversy, emissaries existed and became handlers in these affairs. The matter was thus taken away from media hype, and out of political view. A good example of this was the later November 1997 Fisheries rights issue in the ECS and how it was rather smoothly negotiated as a result of this braking mechanism (Hiroshi Nakanishi, 11/11/2008).

### Approaches to the East China Sea in the 1980s

In the period from 1980 to 1986, Japan and South Korea carried out seven explorations in three sites but finally abandoned these when it became clear that these fields were not economically viable (Drifte, 2008a:5-6). China itself had commenced explorations in the ECS before in the 1980s. A key difference between then and 2003 was that China had kept to areas far from the median line. Since 1985, Japan and China had been discussing the concept of joint operations in the area. Both states have tended to agree on the desirability of joint cooperation but have diverging views on the precise demarcation of the area to be developed (Yarita, 2004: 23-4). Despite these occasional disagreements, from the late 1970s until the late 1980s the Japanese and the Chinese had for the most part succeeded in setting aside the ECS disagreements (of which the islands dispute was the major component) and prevented the issue from destabilizing burgeoning bilateral ties, particularly in the economic field.

### **1989 – 1995: From the Tiananmen Massacre to the Taiwan Crisis**

The ruthless crushing of the Tiananmen pro-democracy demonstrations in June 1989 was regarded as a watershed moment that heralded the beginning of a serious downturn in Japanese and international perceptions of China. Diplomatically however the Japanese were within a few years actually on good terms with the Chinese again where Japan did much to rehabilitate and assist the PRC in stepping out of its post-Tiananmen purgatory (Green, 2003:21).

A characteristic of Japanese approaches to China up until the Tiananmen massacre and even up to the early 1990s was the deference with which many but not all Japanese diplomatic elites and institutions such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) or *Gaimusho* dealt with Chinese issues. According to Drifte, this was attributable to a sense of guilt over past Japanese behavior in China where Japanese diplomats and officials often expressed remorse indirectly rather than open old wounds by tackling the unresolved history issue head on. Since normalization in 1972, the China School (made up of diplomats proficient in Chinese) within the *Gaimusho* had in fact been in the driving seat in terms of formulating Japanese policies towards China and maintaining day-to-day relations. These have tended to treat Chinese concerns in an often sympathetic and non-confrontational manner. Over the years however, Chinese authorities had increasingly been perceived by people in Japan to have manipulated this Japanese sense

of guilt and passivity in order to squeeze more economic and political concessions from Tokyo or to strengthen their own legitimacy at home (Drifte, 2003:17-19).

The bursting of the Japanese economic bubble in the late 1980s and early 1990s damaged Japan's sense of security while the first Gulf War (1990 – 1991) exposed the limitations of Japan's passive checkbook diplomacy in a new post-Cold War world in which a more active role in foreign policy was sought after by allies such as the US (Kral, 1999). This, alongside the ending of decades of LDP rule in the early 1990s opened up a new era of Japanese foreign policy making characterized by greater pluralism and unpredictability (Green, 2003:78). Up until this period, the Japanese felt satisfied that their economic strength, still uncontested regional leadership, and various multilateral institutions could prevent the escalation of tensions between states in the region. The next decade however would witness a far more pessimistic appraisal of Japan's security environment and a more realistic rather than idealistic response. A number of security-related scares contributed to this gloomier outlook (Roy, 2005:192).

In addition, within a few years the Chinese had, through the launch of the Patriotic Education Campaign in the early 1990s, escalated their education and media campaign of demonizing the Japanese and moralizing against them for events half a century earlier. The CCP's seemingly hypocritical behavior of constantly damning the Japanese while accepting their financial assistance and stamping out calls for greater reform and freedom from within was too much to bear for many Japanese (Self, 2002:87). The intensely bitter anti-Japanese hatred and anger inadvertently encouraged by the Patriotic Education

Campaign in China was fed to Japanese homes through the Japanese media and served to strengthen anti-Chinese sentiment in Japan (Roy, 2005:195;201).

### Changing Perceptions of the East China Sea disagreements

Japanese anxieties over the aforementioned 1992 'Law of the People's Republic of China on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone' which claimed sovereignty over large areas of the East and South China Seas reflected genuine diplomatic concerns within Japan and not just the rantings of right-wing groups (Green, 2003:86). In the East China Sea more specifically, Japanese Foreign Minister Kabun Muto publicly protested in May 1993 that Japanese fishing boats had come under alleged attack by Chinese vessels (Wan, 2006:36). In the same year, the PRC became a net oil importer. The Chinese dragon's thirst for oil dramatically increased throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium with the country later becoming the second largest consumer of oil after the US in 2003 (Drifte, 2008a:7). This escalating demand for energy resources went alongside improvements in exploration technology, which, as well as the discovery of potentially significant gas fields in the ECS, gradually compelled China to explore for oil and gas ever closer to Japan's contested median line, a move viewed by many in Japan as evidence of a threat by a rising China to Japan's national interests.

### Vocal Calls for a Normal and more Assertive Japan

Debates in Japan about the need to address the new foreign policy environment by amending their strictly US-enacted pacifist constitution intensified in the media and in political circles from the early to late 1990s with the issue finally being studied at Diet Committee level in both houses in 1999 (Green, 2003:25). The government of PM Kiichi Miyazawa (1991 – 1993) also put the thorny issue of a permanent UN Security Council seat for Japan on the political agenda as a declared foreign policy objective. This illustrated a belief in Japan that the new environment represented a suitable time in which Japan could attain an international political standing that was commensurate with its huge 20% fiscal contribution to the UN (second only to the US). It was also indicative of an increasing desire to shake off the constitutional and legal shackles that were drawn up after the Second World War and classified Japan as an ‘enemy state’<sup>17</sup> (Coulmas, 2006:18). Such changes would also permit Japan to attain a more normal and independent status unlike one of a state constantly sub-ordinate to the interests of the US as was the case since 1945. These debates picked up steam in the 1990s with Japan increasing its involvement in UN peacekeeping missions, and the Kosovo crisis and subsequent NATO bombing of Serbia feeding the desire of Japanese politicians and diplomats for a more active rather than traditionally passive role for Japan in global peacekeeping affairs (Kral, 1999). In all these endeavors, China, the beneficiary of so much Japanese funding and

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<sup>17</sup> See Articles 53 and 107 of the UN Charter.

good-will since normalization, has been unsupportive and at times a major impediment to Japan's objectives.

### Japan's Sense of Security and Perceptions of China

The first of a number of missile tests in the 1990s by North Korea (highly dependent on the PRC for aid and diplomatic support) in 1993 and reports of the North Koreans building a nuclear bomb in 1994 also sent shock waves through Japan and reminded many Japanese of their vulnerability to attack from a politically unstable neighbour. These combined with public awareness through the media in 1992 of the heart-rendering abductees issue involving the kidnapping of unwitting Japanese citizens from Japan's coastal regions by North Korean agents in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Green, 2003:21-22). The Chinese persistence in carrying out nuclear tests in 1995 in the face of sustained Japanese protests, and in proceeding with events that commemorated Second World War and fed anti-Japanese hatred in China reinforced growing public Japanese fatigue over various Chinese complaints targeted at Japan, and touched upon deep Japanese sensitivities over its security and post-war identity (Self, 2002:78). The nuclear tests infuriated a broad spectrum of Japanese including the hawkish right wing and the anti-nuclear left wing. The reaction was an unprecedented but mostly symbolic suspension of up to \$75 million in grant aid to the PRC (Green, 2003:21). China's participation in the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in September 1996 only had a limited effect in easing Japanese anxieties about Chinese behavior (Austin and Harris, 2001:117). A product of such examples of Chinese reluctance to heed Japanese protests

was that it served to undermine the espoused softly softly strategy of China hands within the *Gaimusho* (MOFA) and the LDP. Japanese politicians were thus less likely to react passively or to go out of their way to address Chinese concerns over other controversies such as the Pinnacle Islands disputes (as was the case up to the early 1990s) when they re-surfaced in 1996 (Green, 2003:85).

By the mid-1990s, it was clear that the rise of China and serious concerns over North Korea had become Japan's primary strategic challenges in the region. Japan confronted these two challenges by upgrading its military alliance with the United States while simultaneously pursuing a regional policy that is autonomous from its most important ally (Mochizuki, 2004-05: 117). As argued by Green, the willingness of the Japanese to upgrade their defense capabilities was very significant because it marked a major shift in the post-war strategy of dodging entanglement in a US-China conflict where in fact Tokyo was for the first time calling for a harder line than Washington. The 1995-1996 crisis over Taiwan stemming from Beijing's decision to carry out a series of threatening missile tests in waters in close proximity to Japanese territory in order to signal its resolve to Taiwan, its pro-independence President Lee Teng-hui and its allies in advance of the 1996 Presidential election was a notable development that fed the burgeoning fear of a China threat in Japan (Green, 2003:77-79;87). When Chinese missiles landed in waters close to shipping lanes vital to Japan's well-being, it touched upon an historical sense of vulnerability as an island nation, and in the modern era, as one heavily dependent on imports for food and essential raw materials (Green, 2003:21; Austin and Harris, 2001:117). This was in a context where China's quest to mark its territory and

address its own security and resource vulnerabilities in maritime areas such as the East China Sea and the South China Sea intensified concerns over non-traditional security issues such as rivalry for natural resources, food, and energy in a country with lingering memories of the oil shocks of the 1970s (Drifte, 2003:71). This added considerable emotional and political weight to the rise of China as a domestic political issue in Japan (Austin and Harris, 2001:117).

#### Relations by the Mid-1990s – A Watershed Period

In June 1996 Japan and China ratified UNCLOS. The months preceding ratification had been fraught with bilateral tensions over Taiwan and the activities of Chinese and Japanese vessels in contested waters. May 1995 for example had seen a PRC ship carry out surveys near the Pinnacle Islands only to leave after Japanese protestations. In August, the Japanese Air Self Defense Force (JASDF) sent planes over the islands to ward off Chinese planes which the Japanese believed were carrying out a patrol mission in the area. In December 1995 the Japanese reported that a Chinese oil drilling vessel was stationed in proximity to the islands and in February 1996, it was announced that a JMSA ship had reported a similar ship in the same area (Blanchard, 2005).

Alongside the ratification of UNCLOS in mid-1996, the Pinnacle Islands issue also raised its head again. On July 17<sup>th</sup> 1996, in response to the ratification issue and a stronger perceived assertiveness by China in the ECS, seven members of the Japanese right-wing group the Japan Youth Federation (*Nihon Seinen Sha*) landed on the islands and

constructed a makeshift lighthouse, an act that incurred the wrath of Chinese nationalists, and protests from both the PRC and Taiwan. On September 26<sup>th</sup>, a very public tragedy unfolded when David Chan, a Hong-Kong based activist, drowned after jumping overboard from his protest ship in a bid to avoid arrest by the Japanese Coast Guard (JCG) who had been sent to intercept the group before their attempted landing on one of the disputed islands. This dangerous form of tit-for-tat protests was further evidenced a year later on May 5<sup>th</sup> 1997 when Japanese parliamentarian, Shingo Nishimura, staged a nationalistic religious ceremony on the islands, again drawing protests from Beijing. This was matched within three weeks by a protest flotilla from Taiwan which included over two hundred activists that was once again held off by the JCG (*Reuters*, 06/02/2007). These incidents involving the islands disputes all took place in the context of a marked downturn in bilateral ties in the mid to late 1990s that involved not just the ECS but numerous bilateral problems which included the Taiwan crisis of 1996 and PRC President Jiang Zemin's controversial visit to Tokyo in 1998.

The nuclear tests, the Taiwan crisis, and the rising numbers of incursions into the ECS since the mid-1990s fed a growing image of China as an unruly state on issues such as the East China Sea which was latched onto by the Japanese media, especially by right-wing publications such as the *Sankei Shimbun* that amplified the China threat scare (Green, 2003:85). As one senior China hand in the *Gaimusho* noted, such newspapers are virtually always negative about Chinese issues. Nonetheless, Japanese politicians take heed of what such publications have to say and this places political pressure on the government (Wan, 2006:149). The Taiwan crisis was in particular regarded as a serious

watershed that negatively affected Japanese public opinion towards China (Drifte, 2003:80-81). The domestic and bilateral frictions surrounding incidents relating to the Pinnacle Islands a few months later illustrated the extent to which domestic politics and China policy in Japan had been adversely influenced by a series of events since Tiananmen in 1989 (Green, 2003:79).

A consequence of these worrying developments was that a concern grew amongst many Japanese that it was only a matter of time before the PRC would start pushing its weight and asserting Chinese interests to the detriment of Japan. From the viewpoint of Japanese governments throughout the 1990s, the PRC's apparent greater assertiveness in regards to Japan and other neighbours of China went seemingly hand-in-hand with its increasing capability to enhance its conventional military forces and thus, according to Austin and Harris, 'threaten Japan for the first time in six centuries' where heightened tensions over numerous security and ideational issues were 'matched by equally powerful insecurities in Japan about the potential size of China and its history of unpredictability' (Austin and Harris, 2001:82).

Of major concern in the security realm was the still ongoing dramatic rise in the PRC's military and defense modernization spending where despite the expression of numerous protests and concerns, the Chinese remained tight-lipped about the exact scale and details of this spending. Since 1990, the PRC's defense budget experienced double-digit growth, averaging 14.5% from 1988 to 1997, which was in marked contrast to the 1978 to 1987 period which saw defense expenditure growth of a mere 3.5%. The fact that a significant

chunk of this defense spending, particularly after the 1996 Taiwan Crisis, went towards strengthening the PLA's naval capabilities and defending its disputed maritime periphery contributed to Japanese anxieties about its future security relations with the PRC (Erickson, 2010). In response, the Japanese have tended to address their concerns by subscribing to a balance of power policy with regards to their rising neighbor (Matsuda, 2008:78). This was in a period where in the economic realm, bilateral trade had risen from \$18.2 billion in 1990 to \$62.4 billion in 1996 and Japanese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) increased from \$438 million in 1989 to \$4.5 billion in 1995. Such figures seemed to suggest that this had a modifying effect on the relationship and that both states were able to separate the political and economic fields. However they would also point to the fact that extraordinary economic co-operation could not completely protect the wider relationship from the frictions of the early to mid-1990s (Green, 2003:77).

### Interlinking Politics and Nationalism in Japan

Issues which seem to exemplify a rising threat from neighbors such as China and North Korea resonated well with many Japanese in the 1990s particularly those with right-wing leanings. This relates to the ECS disputes due to strong right-wing links to Japanese mainstream politics. The powerful and influential right-wing in Japan consists of three main sets of people. These are a) major right-wing pressure organizations, b) smaller activist groups, and c) right-wing intellectuals who seek to influence the larger population via the increasingly powerful mass media in Japan. These intellectuals are made up of various writers, commentators, university professors, and those involved in the mass

media. These are quite often involved with moderate right-wing pressure organizations such as the ‘Japan Conference’ (*Nippon kaigi*) and others who seek to push their right-wing agenda via controversial and politically charged issues such as the historical textbook issue. This more moderate mainstream variant of Japanese nationalism also prizes symbols of traditional Japan such as the emperor, the Shinto religion, and the controversial Yasukuni Shrine. The right-wing, through an increasingly vocal media in Japan and their right-wing papers and publications, have provided these intellectuals with the means to influence the wider public via publications such as the daily newspaper, the *Sankei Shimbun* (Industry and Economic News), the bi-monthly *Sapio*, and the monthly magazines *Shokun!* and *Seiron*. These writers also provide inter-linked right-wing activists, pressure groups, and nationalistic politicians with useful data and informed arguments which, for example, they subsequently utilize to defend the controversial Yasukuni Shrine visits by Japan’s political elites, to justify criticism of China and Korea, and to counter the Japanese left-wing (Shibuichi, 2005:200-202).

The moderate mainstream Japanese right-wing should be distinguished from the more extreme and marginal nationalistic Japanese groups. The moderate Japan Association of Bereaved Families (JABF) (*Nihon izoku kai*) for example, is the most powerful of the right-wing organizations with considerable clout (claiming as many as one million votes), influence, and strong relationships with the powerful right-wing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) of Japan. Smaller similar right-wing groups like the Association of Shinto Shrines (*Jinja hincho*), the Military Pension Federation (*Gunjin onkyu renmei*), the Japan Conference (*Nippon kaigi*), and the retired military men’s Association to Commemorate

the Spirits of Fallen Heroes (*Eirei ni kotaeru kai*) have also exerted considerable pressure upon, and have close links with, LDP lawmakers and political factions. Other pressure organizations include business, religious, ideological and public service groups associated with the LDP. These close ties are illustrated in a number of key ways. For example, a number of these influential organizations have successfully and consecutively promoted their own members as political representatives in the National Diet, have LDP members of all ranks act as chairpersons, and have overlapping membership systems between their own local organizational branches and local LDP branches.

As Shibuichi asserts, for such reasons, powerful right-wing organizations are not merely influential from the margins of power but are in many ways part and parcel of the ‘catchall’ LDP and its make-up of right-wing and ‘conservative centrist’ politicians. Over the years, countless numbers of politicians from the LDP have exploited their ties with these powerful groups with the aim of furthering their own ideological convictions or to increase their own electoral strength by bolstering and enhancing these relationships. Given these domestic realities, it is apparent that various LDP Prime Ministers of Japan, as with political leaders all over the world, are vulnerable to ‘institutional pressures’ from both inside and outside the government of the day. The phenomenon of Japanese political elites visiting the controversial Yasukuni Shrine to appease such pressures and obligations or to express their own political convictions, in spite of the diplomatic consequences for relations with Japan’s neighbors, is arguably one of the most cogent examples of domestic actors exploiting domestic popular sentiment for political ends

with negative outcomes for foreign policy (Shibuichi, 2005:200-201). The painful effects of this on the East China Sea after 2002 are exhibited in the next chapter.

### **1996 – 2001: Domestic Constraints, Lost Opportunities**

#### Renewed Frictions in the East China Sea

In June 1996, a few months after the Taiwan Crisis, both Japan and China ratified UNCLOS and with it formally designated their conflicting territorial claims. Japan's ratification saw it assert its claim to not just the islands but also a 200-nautical mile EEZ around them (*Taipei CAN*, 22/08/1996). As mentioned earlier, the period prior to and after ratification was a time of heightened tensions in the ECS. On the Japanese side, frictions developed over the building of an improvised light-house on one of the Pinnacle Islands in mid-July 1996. The Japan Youth Federation (*Nihon Seinen Sha*) also petitioned the government through the Japanese MSA to have the lighthouse recognized as an official beacon. When Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto became the first Japanese leader to visit the controversial Yasukuni shrine in over ten years on July 29<sup>th</sup>, the tensions between the two countries were further exacerbated. On August 18<sup>th</sup>, another smaller Japanese nationalist group, the Small Islands Defense Association planted a wooden Japanese flag beside one of a number of controversial lighthouses on the ECS islands (*Taipei CAN*, 22/08/1996).

Japanese Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda's publicised comment to Hong Kong officials on August 28<sup>th</sup> that the Pinnacle Islands 'have always been Japan's territory; Japan already effectively governs the islands, so the territorial issue does not exist' (Po,1996) poured salt on wounds. It also resulted in very stern protests from Beijing that were in marked contrast to tamer statements made after earlier ECS incidents such as in 1990 when China, in the months following Tiananmen, was in a weaker position to protest (Downs and Saunders, 1998-1999: 133). High profile incidents such as the drowning of David Chan on September 26<sup>th</sup>, and the May 5<sup>th</sup> 1997 landing by the Japanese nationalist politician Shingo Nishimura (and the reaction it caused) also did not bode well for constructive approaches to these maritime disputes. The possibility of positive movement on the islands and demarcation issues was however displayed a few months later when in September 1997, during a trip to Beijing by PM Hashimoto, both sides announced a Fisheries agreement that placed the ownership issue to the side and instead focused on a 200-mile-wide 'joint management zone' for fishing by vessels from both states and the co-ordination of resource utilization (Green, 2003:87). From the Japanese perspective, the cautious optimism that followed this agreement was soon undermined however when Japanese defense papers reported that the activities of PRC research and naval vessels had actually increased in spite of numerous requests by the JMSA to leave the area (*Heisei 11-nendo Bouei Hakusho* (1999 Defense White Paper)).

## The China Card and Calls for a Harder Line

A collection of negative incidents involving China-related issues meant that by the tail-end of the mid-1990s, the rise of China was already, for both elite and ordinary level Japanese, a major topic of discussion and concern on the domestic political scene. In this context, Japanese leaders began to appreciate how an ostensibly and necessarily assertive stance vis-à-vis China could reap political benefits. After Hashimoto (1996-1998) stood down as Japanese Prime Minister in 1998, the new leader Keizo Obuchi (1998-2000) adopted a more uncompromising position than previous Japanese leaders in his dealings with the Chinese government (Self, 2002:79).

When North Korea recklessly test-fired an advanced long range ballistic missile that, for the first time, violated Japanese airspace, overflew Japan, and landed in nearby waters in August 1998 (*Guardian*, 01/09/1998) the Japanese hoped that China, Pyongyang's most powerful ally, would stand alongside the international community in seeking to sanction them for the test. The consistent refusal of China's leaders to publicly condemn the North Koreans or to agree to UN-backed sanctions or Japanese sponsored resolutions at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) aimed at penalizing Pyongyang for its serious indiscretions throughout the 1990s served to further erode Japanese trust in China's commitment to peaceful and harmonious regional relations. The PRC's insufficient response to the 1998 tests, as Japan saw it, and the tests themselves also did little to

convince the Japanese to compromise on Chinese concerns with regards to the tense Theater Missile Defense (TMD) debates that had commenced in the mid-1990s (Green, 2003:92-93;105).

In spite of these challenges however, Tokyo and Beijing continued in their attempts to improve the security relationship. PM Hashimoto for example had actively encouraged confidence-building measures between the military wings of both states and to that end suggested in 1997 that Tokyo should invite PLA officers to Japan to carry out symbolic military exchanges and inspections within the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (*Kyodo*, 02/09/1997). The year 1998 saw the resumption of bilateral defense minister visits after a hiatus of ten years when Chi Haotian, the PRC Minister of National Defense visited Japan to hold high level and constructive talks with political and military leaders, and visits to several of the top military and naval bases in Japan. Plans were also laid for more enhanced security talks and military exchanges including unprecedented reciprocal visits by warships (*China News Digest*, 5 Feb 1998). This positive move was complemented in the same year when the Japanese Minister of Defense, Fumio Kyuma visited the PRC. Following this, the two states discussed plans to follow this up with more high level exchanges and disarmament talks (*Kyodo*, 08/08/1998).

Unfortunately for bilateral ties, the years following 1998 (until 2006) would see very little or no positive movement in terms of high level military exchanges. This downturn was arguably a consequence of increasingly negative relations over a number of issues

that upset ties from 1998 onwards. When Jiang Zemin demanded that the Japanese issue a written apology for their past war crimes or a Clinton-type ‘Three Nos’ declaration on Taiwan, in advance of his historic state visit in November 1998, Tokyo flatly refused (Self, 2002:79). Jiang’s behavior during the visit and particularly his highly publicized castigation of Japan in the presence of Emperor Akihito was regarded by many Japanese as yet another watershed moment in terms of the growing fatigue, insecurity, and fear within Japan with regards to their rising Chinese neighbor (Deans, 2000:125). Revelations in the Japanese press that Jiang was encouraging anti-Japanese sentiment in the PRC while the summit was still ongoing by continuously warning about the dangers of Japanese militarization in statements to the Chinese media only exacerbated negative feelings towards China (Green, 2003:95). Such incidents also meant that many influential elite-level Japanese were less sympathetic to Chinese arguments regarding the East China Sea.

### China’s Rise and Japanese Insecurities

Noting the impact of the rise of China on the Japanese psyche in the late 1990s, retired JASDF Major General Ikuo Kayahara has asserted that the daunting image of ‘the great revival of Chinese civilisation (*Zheng Bijian*)’ conjured up in many Japanese minds, a picture of a mighty Chinese nation that is likely to become a hegemon leaving ordinary Japanese feeling ‘bewildered by an emerging China that was once a world factory but now is growing into a center of economic growth in the world’ (Kayahara, 2006:3). This fear of China developed at a time when unfortunately for Japan, its own economic

strength and prowess had weakened in relation to China. Tokyo's main leverage in terms of its economic power, ODA, although still considerable, was also gradually decreased due to budget cuts. In 2001, Japan was replaced by the US as the world's top ODA donor and has since 1997 seen funds set aside for ODA slashed by as much as 30% (*Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 18/04/2004). A product of such economic changes is that it has affected somewhat, Japan's ability to lever concessions out of the Chinese while also undermining Japanese confidence in the power of economics in persuading Beijing to behave in ways favorable to Japan's interests.

Closer to home, at the street level, the effect of China's rise became more palpable to the ordinary Japanese citizen. This could be felt on a whole number of issues that were covered extensively by the Japanese media. These ranged from the environmental impact, higher levels of mostly Chinese illegal immigration (up to 90% from the PRC), a sharp rise in the number of sometimes very gruesome crimes in Japan by foreigners including Chinese after the early 1990s (Drifte, 2003:71-73). By 2000 for example, 54.2% of all foreign crimes in Japan were committed by PRC citizens and 38% of all foreign prisoners were from China. By the turn of the new century, domestic debates about a subsequent threat to Japanese homogeneity, identity, and national security, and a possible refugee crisis if the Chinese economy should collapse were prevalent within numerous published books and articles on these issues (*Asahi Shimbun*, 17/11/2001; *Mainichi Daily News* 23/03/2001).

Numerous examples of weak political leadership and internecine political factionalism in Japan in the mid to late 1990s also contributed to a heightened sense of uncertainty and insecurity. Crisis management became a cause of particular concern as a result of the poor response by politicians to a number of highly publicised events which included the Great Hanshin earthquake (1995), the *Aum Shinrikyo* terror gas attacks (1995), the Japanese embassy hostage crisis in Peru (1996-97) and the 1997 oil spill in the Sea of Japan where 'in each instance, the national leader of the moment was heavily criticized for failing to take timely, decisive, and appropriate action' (Shinoda, 2007:63).

The 1990s was also a decade bereft of sustained political leadership with as many as nine different Prime Ministers attempting to tackle an unprecedented and complex array of problems. These were Toshiki Kaifu (LDP) (1989-91), Kiichi Miyazawa (LDP) (1991-93), Morihiro Hosokawa (Japan New Party) (1993-1994), Tsutomu Hata (Japan Renewal Party) (April 1994 – June 1994), Tomiichi Murayama (Social Democratic Party) (1994-1996), Ryutaro Hashimoto (LDP) (1996-1998), Keizo Obuchi (LDP) (1998-2000), and Yoshiro Mori (LDP) (2000-01) (Wan, 2006:145). This constant changing of leadership affected the Chinese ability to believe that the Japanese would remain loyal in the long term to promises and commitments made in talks and discussions over issues like the ECS. It also arguably contributed to the oscillating pattern of approaches in relation to these maritime disagreements.

### More Difficult to Adopt a Moderate Line

After Jiang's 1998 visit to Japan, it became much more difficult for Japanese diplomats and bureaucrats to speak positively on China's behalf (Wan, 2006:149). As explained succinctly by one China scholar at the time, 'the traditional pro-China school has been eradicated by China's behavior' (Green, 2003:98). The election of a controversial far-right nationalist, Shintaro Ishihara, as the mayor of Tokyo in April 1999 also pointed to a sizeable constituency within Japan that was becoming more sympathetic to more hard-line nationalist arguments in the midst of unprecedented post-war economic malaise and relative decline in the 1990s, and a heightened disillusionment with traditional post-war Japanese politics (Deans, 2000:125).

As Nakanishi explains, before the cumulative effects of numerous negative interactions on sensitive issues took effect, the China school within the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) was exclusive. After the late 1990s however, the Japanese government tried to mix individuals so that people did not become too associated with the China school. The main factor in this change was the right wing media's attacks on such individuals. From the late 1990s, an image of pro-China people in the MOFA was created where such figures were portrayed as people who were happy to see Japan as a secondary power to China while receiving financial gain from China's economic growth. Attitudes towards China changed significantly as the political atmosphere became more openly anti-China and moved against so-called pro-China Japanese. Right wing publications

such as the *Sankei Shimbun*, while not having a wide readership, nonetheless carried loud front covers for all to see, and furthered the influence of right-wing views of China upon ordinary Japanese people and officials (Hiroshi Nakanishi, 11/11/2008).

Matters were also not helped by the structural changes in terms of personnel and attitudes within the MOFA. These were particularly personnel and generational shifts where once older influential and more sober-minded China hands who had built diplomatic bridges and channels in the post-normalization years and who held an in-depth and more experienced understanding of the dynamics of Chinese domestic politics retired or passed away. Their influence on soothing tensions thus waned. These individuals were progressively replaced by younger specialists and North American area specialists who tended to hold more alarmist views of China (Roy, 2005:200). These shifts meant that in the years immediately prior to the resurgence of the ECS disputes in 2003 that ‘few vocal advocates of compromise’ existed within the Japanese Foreign Ministry. As of 2002 for example, the aging Hiromu Nonaka remained the most prominent China-friendly Tanaka faction advocate of positive ties with China. However, Nonaka’s most likely successor at the time, Makoto Koga, held significantly less power and influence with Chinese counterparts in comparison to Nonaka (Self, 2002:78).

On a positive note, Makiko Tanaka, a daughter of Tanaka faction founder PM Kakuei Tanaka, was appointed Japanese Foreign Minister in April 2001 (until being removed from her position in January 2002 following criticism of Koizumi). This alongside the

fact that Tang Jiaxuan (March 1998 – March 2003), a Japan specialist in the PRC, was serving as China's Foreign Minister since 1998 instilled a short-lived and cautious optimism that ties were about to enter a period of stability. As Wan notes however, the year 2001 would witness some serious difficulties within the relationship. Many of these were reflective of the changed domestic political circumstances in both countries where the two foreign ministers despite their best efforts only had a limited ability in shaping relations and preventing problems. Tanaka failed to deliver on Chinese expectations that she could talk Koizumi out of visiting the Yasukuni shrine in August 2001. Following this visit and a marked deterioration in Chinese attitudes toward Japan, Tang was very careful not to appear overly pro-Japanese because he knew that his 'Japan school' background could be used against him to weaken his position (Wan, 2006:149). Unfortunately the events of 2001 were to set the tone for an unprecedented downturn in relations even in the context of a gradual deterioration since the 1990s. This negative slide made the task of strengthening ties over a whole raft of complex bilateral issues including the ECS frictions all the more difficult, particularly for the PRC's decision-makers.

### Disagreements from the late 1990s until 2001

In November 1998, the PRC commenced full operations of its first oil and natural gas field in the *Pinghu* field, in an area about seventy kilometers from the median line on the Chinese side. Up until 2001, the Japanese did not publicly protest the PRC's exploration activities in the ECS and had even financially assisted the Chinese in this regard. Proof of Tokyo's initial tolerance since the 1970s of China's exploration activities in the ECS was evidenced when Japan co-financed in 1997 through to 2001 – via the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Export-Import Bank (renamed the Japan Bank of International Cooperation (JBIC) in 1999) – the two oil and gas pipelines that connected the *Pinghu* field to the Chinese mainland. Such support would later be severely criticized in Japan during the serious downturn in relations under Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi (2001 to 2006). In October 1999, the Chinese discovered gas in the *Chunxiao* field, a mere 4.8 km from the median line (Drifte, 2008a:10).

The intensification of the PRC's exploration activities corresponded with an apparent rise in the frequency of alleged incursions by Chinese vessels into what are considered to be Japanese waters. For example, in the period from January 1998 through to August 2000, 16 ships entered into areas on the Japanese side on 12 separate occasions. Then in July of 2001, a Beijing-sponsored Norwegian seismic survey ship, the 'Nordic Explorer' showed up within Japan's maritime territory and stayed for two months. Tokyo's reply was to

allege that China had unlawfully intruded into Japan's EEZ. Beijing countered by claiming that the sea's boundaries still remained unsettled (Wei Su, 2005: 45-46).

The Chinese themselves have also grown uneasy about Japan's apparent greater assertiveness in defending its maritime territory. A notable example was when a Japanese coast guard ship chased after and sank a suspected North Korean spy ship close to China's coast and inside China's EEZ in December 2001 using deadly force for the first time since the Second World War. Beijing responded to this by reprimanding Japan for the incident, and denounced it as a violation of China's sovereignty (Wei Su, 2005: 45-46). Despite such incidents, the years prior to 2003 had seen some positive bilateral movement in terms of the ECS with conflict prevention agreements such as the 1997 Fisheries agreement (involving joint regulation and fishing zones) and the 2001 prior notification agreement in relation to scientific research activities (Valencia and Amae, 2003:189) being formulated with limited success to minimize tensions in the area.

In the wider context of uncertainty and change, Chinese actions in the ECS however tended to be seen as denigrating to Japan's EEZ and sovereignty, and exacerbated fears that China was testing the Japanese response to incursions into its maritime territory (Hiroshi Nakanishi, 11/11/2008). This fear of the Chinese expanding at the cost of Japan's sovereignty and interests was illustrated by notable conservative scholars such as Shigeo Hiramatsu who has consistently warned of the PRC's 'objectives.' Examples include articles such as a *Japan Times* article in 2001 entitled 'Slyly, China extends its

reach' (Hiramatsu, 2001) and Hiramatsu's 2006 book 'China's annexation of Japan' (*Chugoku wa Nihon o heigosuru*).

Despite these pressures, consecutive Japanese governments have been eager not to escalate problems over issues like the Pinnacle Islands while standing firm to their claim. Increasingly however Japanese decision-makers have often been attacked as too 'cowardly' on the issue. Up until 2005 for example, Tokyo refrained from even discussing the possibility of Japan drilling for resources in disputed areas of the ECS, with the Maritime Safety Agency (MSA) approaching all ECS related matters very delicately (Hagstrom, 2005:170). As discussed in the next chapter, by the renewal of tensions over maritime territory and energy resources in 2003, Japanese confidence in its passive approach to bear dividends had worn thin.

### Chapter Summary

In covering some of the most pertinent major events and shifts in bilateral relations in the post-war era, the chapter also provided a lead-up to the resurgence of the ECS disputes in 2003. This in turn offered an understanding of how in particular elite political rivalry in the case of the PRC, the China card as an electoral issue in Japan, changes on the domestic political scene in both states, and negative perceptions in general affected how the two countries dealt with controversial issues.

By the time the ECS disputes developed for the first time in the late 1960s and early 1970s during the Mao era (1949-1976) it was apparent that such bilateral foreign policy issues involving Japan though trying at times were much more manageable than in later years. This was in a situation where Japan generally subscribed to the Yoshida Doctrine of focusing on economic growth and minimal defense activity while Chinese leaders understood the over-riding importance of positive ties with Japan in the face of a Soviet threat and crucially had an almost absolute control over foreign policy issues and how they were framed and presented to the Chinese people. The convergent economic and security interests of both states persisted into the 1980s while the strong leadership of figures such as Deng and Nakasone (during years of unprecedented Japanese prosperity and confidence) proved pivotal in navigating the relationship through some turbulent incidents and disputes.

The 1990s post-Tiananmen era however witnessed some decisive domestic and international changes with more numerous and complex factors and players entering the stage between and within the two countries. In China, divisions over these challenges factored into deeper divisions within the elite while the period also saw concerted state-led efforts by Jiang Zemin and the CCP to bolster their legitimacy by appealing to base anti-Japanese and anti-American sentiment in the PRC. This occurred alongside the inadvertent development of more assertive and less manageable popular nationalism which pressed hard on the government to defend the nation's pride and territorial integrity. All these changes meant that by the mid to late 1990s, the Chinese leadership

had now to tread very carefully in their approaches to the sensitive and history-related ECS disagreements when they re-emerged as a potentially conflictual problem.

In Japan, the confidence of the 1980s was soon replaced by a decade of weak leadership, economic decline and uncertainty that hit the Japanese sense of security hard. The 1993 electoral reforms gradually did away with many of the old ways of doing political business in Japan but did not leave a strong and decisive political structure in their place. A sequence of political, security, and ideational related controversies commencing with Tiananmen in 1989 fed some very negative perceptions of China and meant that by 2001, the Japanese public were demanding strong and assertive leadership on issues such as the East China Sea disputes. As a consequence of these collective changes, once manageable disputes were considerably more complicated in a context where the China card had unquestionably acquired considerable domestic political value on the Japanese political scene. This was the setting leading up to 2003, in which both countries walked toward the most serious downturn in the ECS problems since the frictions of 1996.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Lows and Highs: August 2003 to June 2008**

#### **Introduction**

As now shown, the developments and incidents leading up to the Koizumi years (2001 to 2006) contributed to an atmosphere in which Sino-Japanese ties sunk to their lowest level since normalization in 1972. Much of the unprecedented negative sentiment and failed diplomacy in the 1990s had its origins in the machinations of domestic politics and the marked uncertainty and insecurities which the 1990s wrought. This background provided the bonfire on which bilateral issues such as the East China Sea disputes burned. 2003 would see them re-emerge as a source of potential conflict between the two states and yet another public symbol of one of the many seemingly intractable problems within one of the world's most important relationships.

Here, the 2001 to 2008 period is examined, divided into two main sections which in turn are chronologically presented. The main sections deal with China and Japan respectively. The first part of the main section addresses the period from 2001 to 2003 in the PRC. This was a time when the shrine visits controversy and a more assertive Japanese Prime

Minister, Junichiro Koizumi, entered the political stage. It was also a time when the gradual leadership succession from Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao placed considerable constraints on the flexibility of the Chinese leadership in their dealings with the ECS disputes after 2003. This is followed by a discussion of the years from 2004 to 2006, in particular Hu's eventual consolidation of power by the spring of 2005 and how this sowed the seeds for quiet yet positive behind the scenes diplomacy. This section then covers the comparatively positive 2006 to 2008 years when Koizumi stepped down as PM and when Hu had finally consolidated his control over the Party. It concludes with a sample survey of the thoughts and opinions of some key middle elites in China.

The second main section of the chapter looks at the 2001 to 2008 years in Japan and their relationship to the East China Sea tensions. This period was marked by Koizumi's ascension to the role of PM and with it a markedly more assertive and uncompromising public face towards China. It discusses the 2001 to 2003 period and looks at the context in which Japan reacted to the PRC's decision to commence production activities at the *Chunxiao* in August 2003. The section after this looks at the role of domestic politics and intensified animosity in Japan and their relationship to the critical 2004 to 2006 years. The 2006 to 2008 years follow, and reasons examined as to why largely positive developments on the domestic political scene in Japan helped to explain why the Tokyo government was able to reach a 'principled consensus' with the Chinese in June 2008. The final sub-section then provides a sample survey from some Japanese middle elites in which they discuss Japanese perspectives on the ECS disputes after they re-emerged in 2003.

## **China**

### **Context for the Re-emergence of the ECS Disputes, 2001 – 2003**

The 2001 to 2003 period in the PRC is important because it sets the domestic political and bilateral context in which the ECS disagreements re-emerged in 2003. Discussing the complex domestic considerations that the Chinese leaders had to balance and manage in this period provides the reader with some useful insights into where the ECS disputes were positioned in terms of the wider relationship with Japan, and how these disagreements were affected by popular sentiment, political circumstances, and events and developments within the PRC in the months and years leading up to August 2003.

In China the negative sentiment towards Japan that had seen a gradual increase since the 1990s reached its worst levels in decades after 2000. This was largely as a result of a second wave of anti-Japanese nationalism that was fed to a large extent by the Koizumi's government approach to China-related issues, and in particular because of the new Japanese PM's repeated visits to the Yasukuni shrine and the effects these had on Chinese opinion within the Party elite and on the street. The Chinese state was also guilty, arguably to a lesser extent than previously, of feeding anti-Japanese sentiment via the media and the education system. In 2001 for example, the state's Ministry of Education revised its high school textbooks for the first time since the early 1980s. While anti-Americanism was toned down, Japan was treated more unfavorably with lurid and

emotional accounts of atrocities during the occupation ensuring that public animosity towards the Japanese was maintained rather than cooled (Shirk, 2008:170).

When Koizumi first visited the Yasukuni shrine as PM on August 13<sup>th</sup> 2001, the Chinese Foreign Ministry publicly declared their ‘strong dissatisfaction and indignation’ over the visit and declared it to be a violation of ‘the series of solemn statements and commitments made by the Japanese government on the history issue’ (Wan, 2006:241). The gravity of this shrine issue as an obstacle to the type of high-level official exchanges needed to address difficult issues like the ECS was later exemplified on October 14<sup>th</sup> 2003, when a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson stated that China sincerely desired to continue high-level exchanges with the Japanese but that the two governments had to make efforts to bring about ‘favourable conditions’ for high-level exchanges and that Tokyo’s position on the Yasukuni problem was difficult for Beijing to understand (‘Chinese Foreign Ministry Press Conference’, 14/10/2003).

The even steeper downward trend in Chinese attitudes toward the Japanese after 2000 was also evidenced in a succession of opinion polls highlighted by the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper in Japan and the CASS in China. In 1997 for example, some 40% of Chinese questioned, responded with the view that bilateral ties were good whereas 29% said they were bad. By 2002 however, as many as 50% believed that relations were ‘not good’ compared with 22% who viewed ties as good (*Genron-NPO.net*, 2005).

### Gradual Power Transfer

It is apparent that public Chinese diplomatic approaches toward Japan on issues such as the ECS after 2000 were most troubled in a symbolic sense by Koizumi's visits to the Yasukuni shrine in August 2001 and afterwards, alongside other controversies discussed below. However it would be an over-simplification to suggest that the shrine visits alone or the actions of one man were the sole contributory factor in the worsening atmosphere surrounding the ECS frictions after 2002. The dynamics of the PRC's domestic political situation in these years also played an important role in appreciating how the ECS problems were allowed to fester and why the recently nominated General Secretary Hu Jintao (since November 2002) was constrained in how he could deal with these frictions until later when he had more comprehensively consolidated his leadership position.

In a state with a long history of complicated leadership successions, the gradual transfer of power from one leader to another was never going to be easy and straightforward. The succession from Jiang, who was formally stepping down as General Secretary in 2002, to Hu, who was formally succeeding him, was to have a restrictive influence on how the Chinese leadership could publicly approach the ECS disputes when they re-emerged as a serious bilateral issue in August 2003 amid already deteriorating relations. As a result, aside from the obvious heightened tensions with Japan at the time, Hu's first term (2002 to 2007) was characterised by the gradual transference of actual rather than just formal power from Jiang to Hu. A central component in this formal and informal transference of power was the subtle rivalry for power between Jiang's desire to maintain an informal

influence at the highest level through his protégés, and Hu's desire to consolidate his power and avoid the role of a lame-duck leader unable to step into Jiang's shoes. Hu was formally designated as General Secretary at the 16<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in early November 2002 and assumed the Presidency in March 2003 (Fewsmith, 2008: 238-240).

### Complex Considerations within the Elite

The make-up of the key members of the leadership of the CCP following the 16<sup>th</sup> Party Congress indicated the informal influence of retired or soon to retire cadres on selections to some of the top posts. For example, Zhu Rongji, Premier until March 2003, had secured his choice of Wen Jiabao to replace him. Li Peng, former Premier (1988 – 1998) and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC)<sup>18</sup> until March 2003, had earmarked Luo Gan to the important Politburo Standing Committee (PSBC) position of head of the Political and Legal Affairs Committee.

The outgoing General Secretary Jiang Zemin had used his influence to ensure that five or six of his closest political associates would find their way onto the PSBC. As Fewsmith argues, formally Hu Jintao was the new General Secretary but the manoeuvring of Jiang allies and protégés to positions of power on the PSBC was clear evidence of a desire by Jiang to indirectly preserve some authority via his allies and disciples. Hu's top role was

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<sup>18</sup> This is one of the key positions within the Politburo Standing Committee (PSBC).

also complicated by the fact Jiang would remain in the powerful and symbolic role of Chairman of the Central Military Council (CMC) (until September 2004 (CPCCMC) and March 2005 (PRCCMC)) which suggested Jiang hoped for a Deng-like gradual withdrawal from political power. A consequence of this however in the earlier chapters of Hu's succession was a duality in the centres of power at the top tiers of the CCP (Fewsmith, 2008:241). Aside from the obvious wider frictions with Japan, these domestic political realities also made addressing a Japan-related problem as divisive as the East China Sea all the more difficult for the new General Secretary.

### Hu's Difficult Position

In a political system where clear divergences exist between formal and informal power, Jiang hoped, that in his wake, his favourites such as protégés like the Shanghai faction's Zeng Qinghong (designated Vice-President of the PRC in March 2003) could eventually assume the leadership mantle. Jiang and his allies' main competitors were Hu and Premier Wen Jiabao, both of whom had a technocratic background and had strong links with and experience of the Chinese interior. Hu and Wen's power base centred on the Communist Youth League faction of which Hu was once the Secretary General. This is not to suggest that Jiang did not consent to Hu's top role but rather that he was never entirely comfortable with it.<sup>19</sup> The scenario of being originally approved by Deng, and of

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<sup>19</sup> Fewsmith cautions against seeing Hu and Jiang's competition for influence as a classic power struggle. There was tension between the two camps particularly as Jiang attempted to maneuver his allies into key positions. However Hu was very clever and subtle in consolidating his position and at all times was publicly respectful toward the former General Secretary (Fewsmith, 2008: 248).

being in a situation where he was seemingly preferred to Zeng by numerous Politburo colleagues seemed to bode well for Hu in his first year, as long as he did not commit any visible or serious errors in office that could be used to undermine him (Fewsmith, 2008: 238-240;277). The East China Sea was one such issue in which Hu had to thread very carefully.

In this context of consolidating power and keeping one step ahead of potential rivals during his first term (2002 – 2007), Hu had to pursue two conflicting objectives. One was to maintain his credentials as a loyal Party stalwart while the other was to strengthen his own independent authority by cleverly and gradually positioning allies to strategically important posts, establishing coalitions, and promoting his own policy preferences (Fewsmith, 2008: 238;242). As observed by Drifte, in Chinese politics some of the most serious divisions within the top elite are often most apparent during a power changeover when the possibilities of a cohesive and strong approach to challenging issues by the central leadership is weakest (Drifte, 2008b:19). This should remind observers of the difficulties and possible risks posed by an initially weak leadership under Hu trying to consolidate its grip on power while dealing with the ECS disputes after August 2003 and also attempting to avoid being seen to be weak by both rival elites and the public at home. This is very pertinent to Chinese approaches to the re-emergent ECS disputes after 2002 because positive progress later on (after 2006) arguably co-related with a stronger leadership position for Hu which went hand in hand with more favourable domestic

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developments in Tokyo and more helpful diplomatic gestures by the Japanese. These circumstances and gestures were unfortunately absent in the 2001 to 2006 years.

More directly in terms of the East China Sea problems, the new Japanese government irked the Chinese in April 2002 by leasing three of the disputed Pinnacle Islands from their private Japanese owner. This lease was later extended in April 2004 (Roy, 2005:199). This action put all the islands under the direct control of the Japanese government. From Tokyo's perspective, this would help to potentially ease tensions over the islands' issue in two clear ways. One was to strengthen Tokyo's hand in preventing and limiting access to Japanese and Chinese nationalists who sought to land on the islands. The other was that it prevented the sale of the islands to Japanese nationalists who could and probably would politicize the islands' disputes, sour relations with China, and goad Chinese nationalists to respond (Fravel, 2010:152). Beijing however did not read it as such and strongly protested against what they saw as evidence of Japanese expansionism.

Despite the challenges posed to relations by testing bilateral challenges such as the shrine visits, history textbook controversy, the Pinnacle Islands and so forth during the leadership transition period, Hu would have been very conscious of the potential political problems posed should anti-Japanese sentiment be encouraged and exploited as a card to undermine him in elite political rivalry during the gradual succession from Jiang to Hu. His experiences as a student during the Cultural Revolution and as an underling of Hu

Yaobang would have reinforced this sense of caution. The new General Secretary counteracted against the possibility of such a fate befalling him through careful power balancing within the Chinese elite and diplomatic corps so that the chances of Hu and members of his faction being blamed for policy failures in areas like the ECS were lessened and could not be laid squarely at his door alone. This strategy also served to weaken the incentives for elite competitors to exploit the burgeoning anti-Japanese movement in this period as a form of political capital against him (Hughes, 2008:265-267).

Hu's clever balancing strategy was apparent in the manner in which he maintained a degree of continuity with the Jiang era by conceding to the appointment of six key figures from the Shanghai gang to the new Politburo after the 16<sup>th</sup> Congress. This was even though Hu understood that this would more than likely delay his consolidation of power or possibly weaken him if he fell victim to an internal revolt. Zeng Qinghong was one of a number of Shanghai faction members who were appointed to the PBSC. In spite of his political affiliations, Zeng was a figure who was very sensitive with regards to Japan-related issues and like Hu understood how they could be nefariously exploited. The younger Zeng's memories of the treatment of his father Zeng Shan and his own earlier experiences in the 1980s no doubt left a bitter taste in his mouth in relation to the unashamed exploitation of the Japan issue to topple high level cadres (Hughes, 2008:265-267). For these reasons, Zeng's position on the Politburo, while potentially troublesome for Hu Jintao should he be undermined, was in terms of Japan-related affairs a positive benefit. This was because it arguably reduced but did not eradicate the possibility of a

Japan issue being used against Hu as long as he dealt wisely and sensitively with such issues. Hu also appreciated that keeping private channels open with the Japanese would be crucial to maintaining and repairing relations on controversies such as the East China Sea even though publicly relations were very bad and where at all levels there was a palpable sense of anger over the behaviour of the other side.

### A Resurgence in Popular anti-Japanese Sentiment

Hu's attempts to gradually consolidate his power since his succession in November 2002 coincided with a 'second wave' of largely popular and internet-influenced Chinese nationalism as well as re-invigorated debates within the state about how the country should deal with Japan. Alongside the deterioration in ties that followed Koizumi's first visit to the Yasukuni shrine in August 2001, the second wave was preceded by two events that stirred popular and intellectual domestic debates within the PRC about the direction of Chinese nationalism. The first was the September 2001 to December 2001 Zhao Wei controversy when the Chinese public reacted angrily to a photo of Chinese actress and model Zhao Wei in the state-run *Shizhuang (Fashion)* magazine wearing an American designed short dress with a large imperial Japanese flag imprinted on it during a photo shoot in New York. The second was the summer of 2002 Jiang Wen controversy when it was revealed that Chinese actor and director Jiang Wen had, in an interview with a Japanese newspaper, openly disclosed the fact that he had visited the controversial Yasukuni shrine on several occasions (Gries, 2005: 832-836;848).

With the Zhao Wei case, she was to become a nation-wide target for condemnation by the media and nationalists with internet forums being particularly vitriolic in their attacks and demanding an apology. The editor of the magazine in question was also forced to resign. By early December, as many of 6,000 messages, most of them condemning Zhao, had been posted on the popular Sina.com website (*Japan Economic Newswire*, 11/12/2001). Zhao's house in Wuhu city in Anhui province was also attacked by brick and bottle throwing protesters (*Straits Times*, 11/12/2001). Zhao issued a public apology for the photo on national television and on the internet on December 10<sup>th</sup>. In spite of the apology, public outrage continued to linger in some quarters. On December 28<sup>th</sup>, an irate audience member ran on to the stage, pushed Zhao and smeared excrement on her dress during an event in Changsha. On the internet, while some reveled in Zhao's misfortune, others began to question whether or not increasingly internet-led popular Chinese nationalism was getting out of hand (Gries, 2005: 832-834).

Disclosures that Jiang Wen had visited the Yasukuni shrine came at the time when old wounds were being picked at by PM Koizumi's visit to the shrine in August 2001. Koizumi had also made clear his intention to continue with the visits for the duration of his tenure. Jiang defended the visits by insisting that he had done so for film research purposes rather than for any form of reverence or worship. While some, particularly in China's cultural elite accepted Jiang's reasons, others viewed the controversy in the same light as the Zhao Wei case (*Tianjin Daily*, 31/07/2002). Both the Zhao Wei and Jiang Wen controversies ignited debates within the PRC about how Chinese nationalism manifested itself and revealed divisions in relation to the official state nationalism,

cultural and academic elites, the Old Left, the New Left, reform-minded liberals, popular nationalism, internet nationalism and so forth. It also begged the question over what was acceptable and what was not, and whether or not people like Zhao and Jiang as well as the nationalists who condemned them had gone too far (Gries, 2005:834-836). The incidents also arguably reflected the depth of feeling in China towards Japan-related controversies such as the East China Sea disputes, and how such incidents touched upon Chinese sensitivities and dignity, and could snowball into much bigger problems for the Chinese leadership. This second largely internet-based wave of nationalism also reflected how the Party had to manage controversies in a much more careful way than before.

The reform-minded Ma Licheng (a liberal intellectual at the *People's Daily* newspaper) saw such controversies as an opportunity to call on Chinese people to reappraise their relationship with Japan and to move on from the history controversy and from the narrow and increasingly assertive nationalist sentiment expressed towards the Japanese. Ma had developed a reputation since the 1990s for criticizing and taking on the Old Left in their attempts to impede reform and also the New Left who he felt had cultivated the more populist parochial strain of Chinese nationalism (Gries, 2005: 832-837). Ma was also utilized by moderate reformists within the Party elite to fly trial balloons by publishing articles aimed at gauging sentiment towards more pragmatic approaches vis-à-vis Japan (Shirk, 2008:177).

Ma's provocative article 'New thinking on relations with Japan', published in late 2002 set off a vigorous debate within China in 2003. Heated discussions regarding the state's policies towards Japan intensified and the period was characterized by strongly worded debates between academics and internet nationalists. Greater pressure was also placed on the government for a tougher approach towards the Japanese (Gries, 2005:831-832). Unfortunately for liberal reformers such as Ma, the 'new thinking' debate did not proceed as they would have hoped. For Ma himself, the risk he took in publishing his 2002 article would have a detrimental effect on his career and reputation. Internet forums were awash with messages castigating Ma as a 'traitor' and as a Japanese 'ass kisser'. His address and personal details were also published on the internet alongside messages urging people to burn down his house (Liu, 2003). The writer also received death threats. Within a matter of months, the personal toll on Ma was too much. In mid-2003, he applied for early retirement from his job at the *People's Daily*, left Beijing, and started a new job with Phoenix TV in Hong Kong (Gries, 2005:838-839). This outcome suggested that the more assertive strain of Chinese nationalism had won the debate, at least temporarily. Taken alongside serious strains within the bilateral ties, particularly since 2001, the debate also illustrated the difficulty posed to anyone who might propose a more moderate approach to controversies like the ECS disagreements.

In early 2003, Shi Yinhong, a scholar from the People's University in Beijing, had made a qualified defense of Ma in an article for *Strategy and Management* which argued how China's best interests, particularly its security interests and its balancing against the US, lay in an improved relationship with Japan. Both Shi's piece and Ma's article collectively

kicked off a tense debate with numerous ripostes which ranged from moderate criticism, to middle ground proposals, to comments that poured bitter scorn on their views (Gries, 2005:831-832). Shi endured some fierce attacks and hurtful comments that cast doubts on his patriotism. A *People's Daily* writer, Lin Zhibo for example ridiculed Shi's core arguments in paper articles and through online essays via websites such as *People's Net (Renmin Wang)*. Referring to Shi's views on the history controversies, Lin angrily contended that such views are 'irresponsible' because they suggest that the Chinese government should remain 'tolerant and magnanimous' while the Japanese engage in 'ugly behaviours' (Lin, 2003).

Citing examples of such behavior, Lin pointed to Prime Minister Koizumi's visits to the Yasukuni shrine and a statement by Koizumi during a stay at US President Bush's Crawford Ranch in May 2003 when he said 'if China will not compromise on the islands issue, Japan will make China regret it.' In response, Lin claimed that 'These are the threats of a thief or a hoodlum. Spoken at his master's ranch...they are like a dog barking and biting' (Lin, 2003). The abuse meted out to intellectuals such as Ma and Shi reminded China's political class of the explosive potential of Japan and nationalist-related issues to undermine or even ultimately destroy those who were viewed as soft on Japan or who moved too fast to promote new approaches. Instead of being persuaded by the 'New Thinking' debates of 2003 and 2004 as Ma and Shi might have hoped, the PRC's political elite viewed it as a liability and moved to distance themselves from it (Gries, 2005: 843). The tight-rope that elites had to walk was not just in relation to Japan-related controversies but rather a core set of issues that factored into all debates on the

nation and sovereignty. The conflicting tensions at the domestic political level between rational foreign policies and the emotions stirred by nationalistic discourses were also illustrated in the elite-level politicking and disagreements over the usage of the term 'peaceful rise' which coincided with a period of intensifying anti-Japanese sentiment and activities in the summer of 2003 (Medeiros, 2004).

### Pressure from the New Media

At the popular level, according to Gries, the power of the largely internet-based Japan-centred 'second wave' of Chinese nationalism was evidenced by the internet petitions of 2003 and 2004 which garnered the participation of well over a million 'netizens' (Gries, 2005:849). While it is true that internet nationalism had become another and more powerful medium through which greater pressure could be placed on the government, it arguably would be an over-simplification to say that the internet has only served to make life harder for the regime. As Martin observes, the introduction and proliferation of new faster and easier forms of communications such as the internet (websites like YouTube or its Chinese version, YouKu), mobile phones (with camera and video facilities), blogs, text messaging, and even faxing (since the mid to late 1990s) have provided people with more instruments through which the government can be questioned and possibly challenged. One reason for this is that problems are much more difficult to cover up. They have also served as a means in which popular discontent is channeled via instant messaging, the detailing of corruption, viral campaigns and so forth. However these conduits have also given the Party new instruments of political control. For example,

some Party officials pay close attention to internet content and text messages to indirectly monitor other lower level local officials in order to keep them in line and if necessary stamp out corruption and abuses early. The government has also formally and informally utilized the internet through various chat rooms and blogs etc. to propagate the Party's stance and interpretation of events and topical issues (Martin, 2010: 20).

The tremendous expansion of the media in the PRC however has also contributed to more vocal and potentially destabilizing expressions of public outrage and consequently greater pressure from below. In 1978 for example, there were a mere 186 newspapers and only a few magazine and broadcast outlets in the PRC. Present-day China however has over 2,200 newspapers, 9,000 magazines, 1,000 radio stations and 420 TV stations along with an increasing number of cable TV stations (Yang, 2007:271). The majority of these media organizations depend on advertising revenue in order to survive and prosper. As argued by Liu, playing upon China's so-called 'victim culture' or 'sense of sadness' (*beiqing yishi*) that was a consequence of China's 'Century of Humiliation', these groups recognize the business merits of 'publishing jingoistic, anti-foreign articles that pander to national sensitivities that always simmer with obvious benefits for the bottom line'(Liu, 2005). Yinan He also contends that the rapid but still limited 'recent opening up of Chinese society and its mass media has created more public space for bottom-up emotional venting and policy advocacy'. This bottom-up factor could 'aggravate China's political tensions with Japan by preventing Beijing from taking a moderate position or compromising on key sovereignty issues (such as the ECS disputes) in its diplomacy towards Japan' (He, 2007:3).

This, however, is not to suggest that the Chinese government was entirely at the mercy of public opinion in the 2001 to 2008 period. It would be fairer to say that public opinion is certainly a more powerful consideration in foreign policy approaches than in the past. As briefly mentioned, the authorities are also able to exploit such media outlets to help stamp out demonstrations and portray government policies in a favorable light. Evidence of this was the manner in which the government's Propaganda Department was able to use its considerable power to positively frame and influence the public's perception via the internet and the media of the military's response to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic from November 2002 to July 2003. This was particularly interesting since the reality was that the military's response was actually slow and delayed (Fewsmith, 2008: 245-248).

#### Other challenges to a decisive response

The initial sluggishness and dishonesty in which the PRC authorities chose to deal with the SARS crisis was also arguably reflective of the uncertainty caused by the top level divisions within the Politburo between the Jiang and Hu camp. The crisis also occurred at a time when Hu was awaiting Jiang's formal stepping down as President during the annual NPC meeting in March 2003. Jiang had retired as General Secretary in November 2002 but was also still seated in the powerful position of Central Military Council (CMC) Chairman. Hu's ally, Wen Jiabao, was formally assigned the role of Premier at the same March meeting and this arguably strengthened Hu's position. The following month, Hu

made the first concrete efforts to publicly and comprehensively deal with the SARS crisis. Hu's successful management of the crisis and the Party's appeal to patriotism and unity in addressing SARS won him and the Party applause and bolstered his standing among Party colleagues and the general public whose approval could be discerned on the internet even if the Party was responsible for some but not all aspects of this positive spin in relations to the crisis. In contrast, Jiang was perceived as aloof, as being absent from Beijing, and as having run away from the issue (Fewsmith, 2008: 245-248). Hu's astute tackling of the SARS debacle was arguably reflective of his subtle political tactics but also of the strides that could be made on difficult issues such as the East China Sea if favourable political conditions arose.

Despite this success, Hu knew that as long as Jiang remained as Chairman of the CMC that a cloud of doubt might descend over his own leadership and prevent him from defining his administration and stamping his own authority on policies. As Fewsmith observed, 'if Hu Jintao did not assume it (Chairmanship of the CMC) then soon the rumor mill would start and sow doubts about Hu Jintao's power and longevity as leader.' Without this there would remain two centres of power in the PRC and the transfer of power would remain incomplete. The powerful military had also been seen to express 'very vocal, very public, and very inappropriate support' for Jiang in 2003 even though significant rumblings among military circles were heard at the March 2003 NPC meeting about the problematic duality of power. The powerful precedent set by Deng of stepping down from the CMC partly in order to allow Jiang to consolidate his own role placed further pressure on Jiang to follow his example (Fewsmith, 2008: 254-255). The question

however was still when this would happen, and until Jiang formally stepped down, Hu's position would remain uncertain and he would need to hold back before he would have the necessary power and leeway in which stamp his own mark on government policies.

### A Period of Discontent

This dynamic period of gradual leadership transference coincided with the resurgence of the sensitive East China Sea disputes when the Chinese began exploration activities at the *Chunxiao* field in August 2003. It also ran alongside the aforementioned 'new thinking' debate at both popular and elite levels as well as the more elite confined 'peaceful rise' discourse that came in the context of a dramatic flurry in anti-Japanese activities and sentiment during that summer. June 23<sup>rd</sup> saw the first ever internet organised trip to attempt a landing on the Pinnacle Islands from mainland China. This ultimately unsuccessful adventure set off from a port in Zhejiang province and involved a mere thirteen people (ten mainlanders and three from Hong Kong), only to be hampered by the Japanese Coast Guard but not before the activists publicly burned a Japanese flag before turning back. Beijing's public response to the incident was to assert that 'Chinese sovereignty over the Islands is indisputable' (Lai, 2003). Tokyo publicly responded in similar fashion (Gries, 2005:844).

In July, savvy internet nationalists campaigned against the contracting of a \$12 billion Beijing to Shanghai high-speed rail link to Japanese companies. Central to this campaign was an internet petition which collected as many as 90,000 signatures within a few weeks

and which they hoped would force the government to back down. This was a convincing example of the strength of anti-Japanese sentiment at the time and of the use of the internet to promote it. It also served as a warning to the government to be sensitive about public opinion. The rail link petition was handed in to the Ministry of Railways in Beijing on July 29<sup>th</sup>. One of the petition logos used contained a clenched fist and aroused appeals to socialist propaganda declaring that ‘Heaven and Earth will not tolerate traitors. We don’t want the Japanese bullet train. We refuse the use of Japanese products for the Beijing-Shanghai line’ (Deng, 2003). Within a matter of weeks, it was apparent that the petition and its surrounding campaign had sufficiently concerned Party officials and elites to persuade them to avoid any public cozying up with the Japanese. When the Japanese Minister of Transport Chikage Ogi visited the Chinese capital in early August, the reception she experienced was at best cool. Premier Wen Jiabao and railway ministry officials were not available to meet her, the Chinese and Japanese medias reported it as a snub (Kahn, 2003), and the once promising rail link deal was put off for the foreseeable future. This occurred at a time when the two neighbors should have been commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 1978 Peace and Friendship Treaty (Gries, 2005:844).

On August 4<sup>th</sup> 2003, a toxic gas leak occurred when construction workers accidentally dug up mustard gas barrels left behind by the Japanese Imperial Army in World War Two resulting in the death of one worker and injured forty-two others in the north-eastern Chinese city of Qiqihar (*China Daily*, 19/10/2003). This incident set off a wave of public revulsion and anger on the street and on the internet with photos of the victims and their burns published in the papers (Gries, 2005:845), and was a bitter reminder of the

lingering effects of Japan's dark history in China. It also spurred the organization of a petition calling for compensation and a definitive commitment by Japan to resolve the abandoned chemical weapons issue which resulted in the collection of over a million signatures (Roy, 2005:203).

August 19<sup>th</sup> 2003 represented the real opening salvos in the resurgent ECS tensions, when Beijing finalized exploration contracts with major energy firms in both China and abroad including Shell and the US giant UNOCAL permitting them to engage in billion dollar exploration and production gas projects in the contested sea, particularly in the *Chunxiao* field area (Takahashi, 2004: 1-4). The field first seriously factored into Beijing's energy objectives in 2000 when a fifth test well in the area showed enough potential reserves to justify exploration and production. The ultimate decision to extract gas from the said field also complemented Beijing's stated aim of diversifying its energy supplies to major urban and industrial centers along its eastern coastline (Zha, 2008). In a context of numerous negative diplomatic and public gesturing during what was arguably the nadir of post-normalization ties, the Chinese exploration decision could not have come at a worse time. The unwillingness of Beijing to step back from this decision may arguably have been fed by frustration over Tokyo's stubborn refusal to respect the Chinese point of view on issues such as the Yasukuni shrine.

In September, the Abandoned Chemical Weapons (ACW) petition organizers submitted their appeals to the Japanese Embassy in Beijing. Over the next two months, the two

governments agreed to a financial settlement to deal with the lingering issue of abandoned chemical weapons in China (Roy, 2005:203) but this did little to cool the fires of Chinese anger in the context of the deep hurt felt by PM Koizumi's repeated shrine visits since 2001. As well as the ACW issue, the media also revealed that the police were investigating a three day orgy (from September 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>) involving nearly 400 Osaka businessmen and several hundred Chinese prostitutes at a prestigious hotel in the southern Chinese city of Zhuhai. To add insult to injury, the orgy coincided with the 72<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of Japan's invasion of North-east China in 1931 (*China Daily*, 18/11/2003). As with earlier incidents, the Zhuhai scandal received nation-wide media and internet attention with many chat-rooms peppered with hateful anti-Japanese posts (Gries, 2005:844). On the diplomatic front, an official from the Chinese Foreign Ministry described the incident as 'odious' and that it had 'harmed the feelings of Chinese people and also seriously harmed Japan's international image' (*Sydney Morning Herald Online*, 01/10/2003).

When a small group of Japanese exchange students and their Japanese teacher performed an ill-judged, silly, and sexually suggestive dance on stage as part of a party piece at a university cultural festival in Xian in late October, it sparked protest marches of up to 1,000 people, elicited widespread condemnation, violence against other Japanese students and residents, and attacks on Japan-related property in surrounding areas. The police had to be called in to restore order and protect foreign students on campus while the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned a Japanese embassy official to air the government's protests. The Japanese at the center of the incident later published an

apology for their actions (Takahara, 2008:14-17; Roy, 2005:203; Watts, 2003). In December, the Japanese car maker Toyota was forced to make an apology after angry protests from the public over two seemingly innocuous car ads that were published in a Chinese car magazine. The ads were widely interpreted as implying Japanese superiority over China and as having alluded to Japan's occupation (Roy, 2005:204). As one Chinese newspaper saw it, by late 2003, 'Chinese feelings of hatred for the Japanese are rising without interruption' (*Sing Pao Daily* (Hong Kong) 01/11/2003) in an atmosphere where frequent anti-Japanese incidents were occurring in almost every corner of the country (Gries, 2005:843-844). Such Chinese ill-feeling extended to most if not all issues involving Japan including the renewed East China Sea tensions.

### **Worsening Relations: 2004 and 2005**

Beijing's strong protests against the shrine visits persisted into 2004 with PRC vice foreign minister Wang Yi requesting an immediate meeting with Japan's *charge d'affaires ad interim* Chikahito Harada to lodge a complaint against Koizumi's fourth visit in as many years to the shrine on New Year's Day 2004. The meeting was broadly covered by China's major news outlets such as *Xinhua News Agency* where Wang was reported to have told Harada that the controversial shrine hosts the spirits of Class A war criminals 'whose hands were stained with the blood of Chinese and Asian peoples' and that the Japanese PM's persistent visits encouraged the further deterioration of the political

foundations of friendship between the two countries. Wang continued by protesting that ‘Chinese people absolutely cannot accept this type of betrayal.’ The same *Xinhua* issue included an editorial castigating Koizumi’s behavior as evidence of his government’s real attitude towards Japan’s history and stated that Koizumi’s claimed contemplation of his country’s past was a ‘phony introspection on lips only’ (*Xinhua*, 01/01/2004).

This ill-feeling extended to the East China Sea with a failed attempt on January 15<sup>th</sup> by Chinese nationalists on two vessels to land on the Pinnacle Islands with the intention of erecting a monument emphasizing China’s claim (Blanchard, 2006: 220). JMSDF patrol boats allegedly had to ram the two Chinese fishing boats involved in order to hold them off (*SinoDefence.com*, 2009) Such endeavours ultimately bore fruit two months later when seven activists landed on the main island, forcing the Japanese immigration police to detain them for illegally entering Japanese territory. In keeping with normal practice, Beijing responded angrily while on the streets the incident elicited three days of small scale protests in the Chinese capital (Blanchard, 2006: 221). In April, Tokyo decided to respond to such incidents by positioning two Japan Coast Guard (JCG) vessels near the disputed islands so as to block attempts by activists seeking to land on them (Fravel, 2010:152). When Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi visited Beijing in early April 2004, Premier Wen Jiabao used the occasion to reiterate China’s claims to the islands (Blanchard, 2006: 220-1). During bilateral talks a few weeks later, in a reflection perhaps of Chinese concerns over what they saw as increased Japanese expansionism, PRC diplomats stated that they would not recognise Japan’s EEZ around the Okinotorishima atoll on the grounds that it was not an islet as claimed by the Japanese

but rather just a collection of rocks (Yoshikawa, 2005:52). On April 23<sup>rd</sup>, a bus belonging to a Japanese nationalist group rammed into the Chinese consulate in Osaka, Japan to protest China's claims to the ECS islands (*SinoDefence.com*, 2009). The Abandoned Chemical Weapons (ACW) issue also raised its head again in May when eight Chinese construction workers in Qiqihar were injured after accidentally disturbing buried canisters. This renewed demands for Tokyo to comprehensively deal the disposal of such munitions (Roy, 2005:203).

In June, there were frictions over the ECS demarcation issue surrounding China's construction of a new drilling facility in the Chunxiao field close to the median line. The Japanese requested geological data in order to ease their suspicions that the Chinese might be siphoning resources from under the median line. On June 29<sup>th</sup>, Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) headed by the nationalistic minister Shoichi Nakagawa declared to the media that Japanese vessels would commence exploration activities in areas east of the median line but including areas claimed by the PRC (Przystup, 2004:9). The PRC's Foreign Ministry reiterated its rejection of Japan's median line and warned that this unprecedented decision by the Japanese was from their perspective an intolerable violation of its sovereignty, and was provocative and dangerous (Blanchard, 2006: 221). On June 30<sup>th</sup>, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs Chen Guofeng summoned the Japanese ambassador to the PRC to protest Japan's undersea survey plans (Przystup, 2004:9). Tokyo for its part re-emphasized the worrying frequency of PLAN survey ships and marine research vessels in sensitive areas of the East China Sea (Blanchard, 2006: 221). Throughout all these rising tensions and negative

incidents, the Chinese leadership sought to quietly manage public anger over the ECS problems in a controlled way. For example, on July 19<sup>th</sup>, authorities in Fujian province in southern China prevented ten members of the ‘China Federation for Defending the Diaoyu Islands’ from setting out to land on the Pinnacle Islands (*SinoDefence.com*, 2009) on the grounds that they were using Chinese fishing vessels for non-commercial purposes (Fravel, 2010:153).

When the Tokyo metropolitan government’s board of education gave its approval in August to a controversial textbook by the right-wing ‘Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform’ which downplayed the scale of the Nanking Massacre, it was widely condemned by the Chinese (Roy, 2005:202). Virulent anti-Japanese sentiment was evident at the Asian Cup soccer tournament in early August 2004 when Chinese supporters in Beijing, Chongqing and Jinan subjected the Japanese team to a barrage of insults and unsavoury behaviour such as attacking the team bus with bottles. During the televised final between Japan and China, in which the Japanese ultimately prevailed on a score-line of 3-1, the home fans were alleged to have chanted ‘Kill!Kill!Kill!’ and ‘May a big sword decapitate the Japanese!’ (*New York Times*, 09/08/2004). When the Ministry of Railways attempted to revitalize the dormant rail link issue in late August by granting the contract to a collection of predominantly Japanese companies, the decision was attacked within 24 hours by a group called the ‘Patriot Alliance Web’ ([www.1931-9-18.org](http://www.1931-9-18.org)) who had in the same short period gathered up to 69,000 online signatures demanding a reversal of the agreement. Rather than defer the deal again and further jeopardize a project essential to China’s development, the government instead chose the risky option

of closing down the website (Cai, 2004). In September, Tokyo repeated its request from China for hard data on its exploration activities in the ECS. Beijing responded with the expected refusal but offered some hope by proposing that the two countries begin talks on possible joint exploration (Blanchard, 2006: 221).

During the first round of a series of bilateral negotiations over the ECS on October 19<sup>th</sup> the Chinese government also announced that it would engage in bilateral discussions to discuss conflicting claims over exploration activities in the ECS (*SinoDefence.com*, 2009). Shortly afterwards, the Japanese requested emergency discussions with Beijing following intelligence reports that the Chinese had stepped up its exploration activities in areas disputed by Japan (Blanchard, 2006: 221). Amid these frictions, Royal-Dutch Shell and Unocal pulled out of an agreed ECS project with China, citing a lower than expected value assessment of the project. It was believed however that Japanese protests over the exploration activities might also have contributed to the decision to withdraw (Zha, 2008). In the same month the *People's Daily* expressed concerns that the Japanese military was intent on setting up a sophisticated detection system in the East China Sea and also noted that 'Since the Chinese-Japan dispute over resources of East China surfaced, Japan has enhanced all kinds of military deployment in this sea area' (*People's Daily Online*, 09/11/2004). By the end of the following month, the two sides participated in talks again with the only forward progress being a commitment to continue talking (Blanchard, 2006: 221). When Hu and Koizumi met up with each other during a mini-summit on the sidelines of APEC summit in Chile on November 21<sup>st</sup> 2004, Hu claimed that the shrine visits were the principal cause of the frozen bilateral relationship and drew

attention to the fact that 2005 would be a very sensitive year for such historical issues because it marked the sixtieth anniversary of the CCP's victory over fascism (*Asahi Shimbun*, 22/11/2004). Despite such strong public and official protests against the visits by the Chinese, Koizumi's continued visits to the shrine inevitably led to a freeze in high-level visits to Japan and China by the leaders of each country. This freeze served as a major symbol of high-level tensions between the two neighbors (Wan, 2006:17). In this distrustful and negative bilateral context, the ability of the Chinese leadership to adopt a publicly moderate or innovative approach to the ECS challenges was all the more constrained.

#### Hu's balancing act

This public reality thus made public positive and constructive approaches towards Japan all the more difficult for leaders such as Hu as they attempted to gradually consolidate their leadership. In order to avoid a disastrous severance of ties with Japan which could reflect badly on his diplomatic skills, Hu had to balance public gesturing with private maneuvering which arguably exemplified the tight-rope between two legitimating strategies that Chinese elites must walk. The appointment of Li Zhaoxing to the post of Foreign Minister at the 16<sup>th</sup> National Congress in 2003 (after he had defected from the Shanghai Faction) was another notable example of Hu's strategic balancing in terms of personnel (Lam, 2006). This appointment permitted Hu to assign blame on Li for the worsening ties with Japan at a time with the anti-Japanese movement was in the ascendancy, and as Jiang's star gradually began to wane. Li was also the public face who

had the unenviable role of banning continuing anti-Japanese demonstrations and warning the public not to get involved (Hughes, 2008:267).

While this was the public face of bilateral ties, Hu utilised his own trusted protégés to engage in quiet behind the scenes diplomacy to maintain vital and at least cordial relations with Tokyo. For example, in the summer of 2004, Hu positioned a Japan hand and fluent Japanese speaker, Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi, as the PRC's ambassador to Japan. Another positive move was permitted after this with the 'mini summit' on the sidelines of the APEC summit in Chile in November 2004 between the two countries' leaders (Lam, 2006). Hu's aforementioned public gesturing on the shrine issue while striving to repair top-level diplomatic links in private arguably reflected his dual strategy toward Japan and his domestic audience.

### 2005 – the Nadir of Bilateral Ties

2005 would come to represent the worst year in the bilateral relationship since the normalization of ties in 1972. In January, the *People's Daily* ran an opinion piece that poured scorn on reports of Japan's plans to deal with a possible invasion by a 'foreign' force of Japan's southern islands in the ECS and areas near it (*People's Daily*, 18/01/2005). On February 4<sup>th</sup>, the Chinese Foreign Ministry reiterated its call for Sino-Japanese disagreements in the East China Sea to be resolved through negotiation and dialogue (*People's Daily*, 04/02/2005). On February 9<sup>th</sup> however, renewed ECS tensions developed after the Japanese government decided to place a lighthouse which had been

constructed by Japanese nationalists on the main Pinnacle Island in 1988 under ‘state control.’ In protest the Chinese Foreign Ministry declared the act a severe violation of Chinese territory. There was also a small demonstration in front of the Japanese embassy in Beijing (Blanchard, 2006: 222).

February 2005 also saw a very serious development from the Chinese perspective with the ‘Joint Statement of the US-Japan Consultative Committee.’ This joint statement formulated by the top foreign affairs and defence officials in Japan and the US caused consternation by stating that the ‘peaceful resolution of issues concerning the Taiwan Strait’ was a ‘common strategic objective.’ This move further raised the stakes in the ECS disputes because as Roy notes, ‘now and through the medium term, China’s greatest Japan-related strategic concern is the possibility of Japanese involvement in the defense of Taiwan’ (Roy, 2005:199). Unsurprisingly, the immediate riposte by the Chinese was to angrily protest that the Japanese were directly intruding into China’s domestic affairs (Bishop, 2004). The Chinese sense of injustice vis-à-vis Japan on strategic and historical issues also seemed to be justified by similar territorial and historical problems with Japan involving Russia and South Korea that caught the headlines in early 2005. As one scholar asserted ‘From a Chinese perspective, Japan’s failure to reflect on its aggression in the past is the root problem of Japan’s recent assertiveness vis-à-vis its neighbours’ (Wan, 2006:258). In early April, the Japanese government granted exploration rights to Japanese companies to commence activities in disputed areas of the ECS. This decision followed the PRC’s refusal to cease its own activities after official Japanese requests. Beijing’s response was to repeat its oft stated line that it had never recognized the median

line and declared that the Japanese decision was a major provocation. It also warned the Japanese to desist from further activities in the ECS that could exacerbate the disputes and repeated its call for Tokyo to shelve the demarcation issue and instead focus on joint development (Blanchard, 2006: 222).

During the lowest point of bilateral ties in April 2005, the *China Youth Daily's* Tokyo Correspondent offered a very insightful view on the significance of the disputes, stating 'The conflict over East China Sea resources will cause the contradictions and opposition in Sino-Japanese relations to continue to escalate, and they have already reached a dangerous state of direct resistance.' The *People's Daily* proclaimed that 'The key to breaking out of historical difficulty and opening up the future is in Japan's hands' (*BBC News*, 16/04/2005). Chinese Vice Foreign Ministry Wu Dawei also declared that the relationship had reached its lowest point since the normalization of ties in 1972 (*BBC News*, 18/04/2005).

In this context, Hu had to deal with pressure at home not to publicly give an inch to the Japanese on any issue, not least the ECS disputes. With the sensitive Yasukuni issue still hanging over the relationship, there was tremendous support for a strong posture against the Japanese where crucially even those who appreciated the importance of amicable ties with Japan for China supported a tough approach on the issue (*Xinhua*, 26/11/2004). Surveys carried out by both Japanese and Chinese organizations in this period also reported the fact that a mere 11% of Chinese people viewed Sino-Japanese ties as good or

very good with 55% stating that relations were bad or very bad with a high 53% claiming that they had no affinity for Japan (with only 12% claiming they had) (*Genron-NPO.net*, 2005).

By the first half of 2005, Hu's political position had been strengthened by the manner in which Jiang was gradually sidelined and subtly ushered away from the centre of power. In September 2004, Jiang stepped down from the powerfully symbolic position of head of the Party's Central Military Commission (CMC). This was followed in March 2005 when he formally retired as head of the state's CMC. Both positions were filled by Hu thus placing him in the top three roles of General Secretary, President, and Chairman of the CMC and represented a key stage in the leadership transition (Hughes, 2008:265;268). The more assertive action taken by the Chinese authorities to stamp out anti-Japanese protests after mid-April was arguably indicative of Hu's stronger position. These moves came following initially unsuccessful attempts by the authorities to place curbs on escalating anti-Japan demonstrations since mid-March which had arisen in protest of Tokyo's call for a UNSC seat and its approval of a controversial history textbook. The Party leadership of course maintained its own public criticism of Japan throughout the extended period of protests. The regular pattern in March-April 2005 was of the Chinese authorities permitting protesters to let off steam and then quietly taking preventive measures to reduce the chances of mass expressions of anti-Japanese sentiments from seriously hurting the relationship or morphing into anti-government protests (Roy, 2005:191).

On April 6<sup>th</sup> for example, the Party's Propaganda Department placed a comprehensive media blackout (websites, TV stations, and newspapers) in advance of the planned April 9<sup>th</sup> protests in Beijing. Despite these measures, by the third weekend of demonstrations, protests were taking place in 25 cities throughout the state and it was apparent that a stronger response would be necessary (*Cheng Ming*, (Hong Kong), May 2005). By the third week, it had also become clear that protests were starting to get out of control, were starting to deal with non-Japan related issues, and were threatening the stability of the regime. In the south-east for example upwards of 30,000 townspeople had violently clashed with officials and the police over pollution problems in the area (*South China Morning Post*, 12/04/2005). In Shenzhen, over 10,000 workers went on strike at a Japanese-owned factory to demand trade union rights (*Washington Post*, 26/04/2005). In Beijing, some 2000 retired military personnel from throughout China held a pensions-related sit-down outside the PLA's headquarters in Beijing (*Reuters*, 15/04/2005). By April 16<sup>th</sup> the government knew that something decisive had to be done to halt the tide of anger (Shirk, 2008:175). In this context, Hu took more assertive action to restore order. The events of March-April 2005 must have served as a reminder to Party elites as to the danger of initially anti-Japanese rallies transforming into anti-government riots and demonstrations. They may also have been seen as a timely warning with regards to the risks to stability posed by those, at the political and public level, who encouraged and promoted anti-Japanese sentiment and protests. In addition, Hu's successful response in forcefully calming anti-Japanese protests after mid-April highlighted the co-relation between a stronger leadership position and more favourable approaches to Japan-related controversies of which the East China Sea problems were just one. Another illustration of

this decisiveness from Hu was the ability of the authorities to clamp down assertively on any planned protests surrounding the anniversary of the May 4<sup>th</sup> movement when students demonstrated in 1919 against a post-First World War treaty that granted formerly German territories in China to Japan. In 2005, this involved closing off Tiananmen Square and holding a coming-of-age ceremony there instead to head off any potential protests (Shirk, 2008:144).

On the public diplomatic front, the link between sensitive nationalistic controversies and their public effect on relations was clearly illustrated by the sudden cancellation of a high profile visit in May 2005 to Japan by Chinese Vice Premier Wu Yi, ostensibly due to other unspecified 'domestic duties' (*BBC News*, 18/04/2005;23/05/2005). The scheduled visit was aimed at visibly stabilising bilateral ties after the anti-Japanese demonstrations that erupted throughout China in April 2005. Wu, who was reluctant to make the trip in the first place due to the potential political consequences for her reputation, also hoped to persuade Japanese business leaders to convince their Prime Minister to cease his trips to Yasukuni. In reality, the mid-trip cancellation was a protest by Wu against troublesome remarks made about Koizumi's visits to the Yasukuni Shrine. Wu also used the cancellation to demonstrate against the Japanese government's handling of other historically sensitive issues (Wan, 2006:17) such as Taiwan and the history textbook issue to name but a few which added to the negative interactions between the two capitals. Shirk provides some interesting and telling insights into this episode and arguably the difficulties posed for Hu as long as Koizumi continued with his shrine visits, amongst other unhelpful diplomatic gestures. Shirk describes how Wu, the PRC's

highest-ranking female leader, made the most of the situation by public grandstanding and posturing against the Japanese after the PM had defended his right to visit the shrine. Even though Wu's unsanctioned cancellation was a clear breach of diplomatic protocol which privately angered Hu, it won her many plaudits in China and bolstered her image amongst the Chinese public. On the 'Strong Nation' website for example, one netizen commented 'Every single patriotic Chinese should applaud Wu Yi's 'disrespectful' cancellation... without it Japanese leaders' evil characters would not be exposed.' A head of a major think-tank in the PRC noted that the General Secretary could have and should have fired her for the breach but to have done so would have been political suicide for Hu (Shirk, 2008:175).

### Trouble at Sea

In this context, it was not necessarily surprising to witness little or no substantial progress being made with regards to the East China Sea disagreements. In June 2005, trouble flared up again when the Koizumi government proclaimed that 18 Japanese citizens had officially indicated the Pinnacle Islands as their place of residence in the citizens' registry. A spokesperson for the PRC's foreign ministry asserted that they would never accept unilateral Japanese activities to strengthen their claim and emphasized that the islands were Chinese (Blanchard, 2006: 222). In July, Ishigaki island assembly members in Okinawa prefecture (of which the Pinnacle Islands are a part) submitted a motion calling on the mayor and assembly members to inspect the islands. Beijing again protested and angrily declared in the *People's Daily* that Japan 'not only connives at the right-wing groups provocative activities, but also goes back on its promise of not taking

unilateral actions and tries in vain to capture the Diaoyu Islands as so-called Japanese territory by *inter alia* starting to rent the islands in 2002 and passing resolutions.’ The article continued by cautioning that ‘If Japan continues to take unilateral actions time and again to challenge China’s territorial sovereignty, it can only worsen China-Japan relations’ (*People’s Daily Online*, 21/06/2005). Less than a day later, China’s Foreign Ministry attacked the manner in which the Japanese Coast Guard had dealt with Chinese fishing vessels and their crews which had been fishing in contested waters. It also complained that the median line had been drawn without consultation with the PRC and that Japan had turned down Beijing’s suggestions for joint development (*People’s Daily Online*, 22/06/2005).

Arguably the most serious development in the post-2002 ECS disagreements was the July 2005 decision announced by Japan’s nationalistic METI Minister Shoichi Nakagawa that the Japanese government had for the first time given test drilling rights in the East China Sea to a Japanese company, Teikoku (Imperial) Oil. As noted by Blanchard, what was ominous about this decision was that the Japanese granted these rights in a very sensitive area where PRC exploration activities were already taking place. The Chinese position was summed up by a Foreign Ministry spokesperson who advised the media that ‘If Japan persists in granting drilling rights to companies in disputed waters, it will cause a serious infringement of China’s sovereign rights’ (*BBC News*, 14/07/2005; *People’s Daily*, 14/07/2005). On July 21<sup>st</sup>, the *People’s Daily* ran a lengthy opinion piece which denounced the Teikoku decision by Japan as well as its decision to assign Japanese names to what the PRC saw as Chinese oil and gas fields in the ECS in order to emphasis

its claims (*People's Daily Online*, 21/07/2005). The oil and gas fields in question were *Chunxiao* (*Shirakaba*), *Duanqiao* (*Kusunoki*), and *Leng Quan* (*Kikyo*), *Longqing* (*Asunaro*), and *Tianwaitian* (*Kashi*) (Drifte. 2008a:13). The piece warned that such actions by Japan would 'make the ECS the most dangerous area for possible eruption of conflicts between the two countries' and called attention to the fact that the Chinese government had protested Japanese activities on numerous occasions in the past. The article also declared that the PRC's Embassy in Japan had notified the Japanese Foreign Ministry that the Chinese Coast Guard (MSA) would persist in patrolling 'China's' EEZ (*People's Daily*, 21/07/2005).

Such negative views could also be seen in a July 2005 article in the *Xinhua* newspaper when it cautioned that 'Giving Teikoku the go-ahead to test drill is a move which makes conflict between the two nations inevitable, though what form this clash will take is hard to tell.' The broadsheet continued by asserting that the Teikoku move 'is not simply about new sources of energy' but that, 'It reveals plainly the country's intention to take the China Diaoyu islets for good' and warned that 'With the issue inconclusive, the nod from today's Japanese leaders will only serve to fan the flames of trouble' (*Xinhua*, 16/07/2005).

Less than six hours after 'Sina.com', the PRC's internet news portal, had announced the decision by the Tokyo government, some 2400 people had posted messages of 'strong indignation and condemnation' such as 'it is an encroachment of China's foremost interest' and 'Japan intends to hinder China's development by the act.' The official

Xinhua news agency also reported these angry internet postings, which according to Shirk, ensured that senior Chinese officials could not ignore them (Shirk, 2008:147). Xinhua also publicized the views of a Zhejiang University professor who proclaimed ‘Japan’s ambition of seizing oil and gas resources on the continental shelf of the ECS is a new form of its expansionist and invading ideology during World War Two’ (*Xinhua*, 18/07/2005).

Similarly angry sentiments about the July 2005 licensing decision by Tokyo were likewise shared by Ji when he wrote in 2006 that for China, any unilateral developments by a foreign state on any part of the continental shelf are regarded as a violation of the PRC’s territory and sovereignty. According to Ji, the decision by the Koizumi government in July 2005 for example to grant Teikoku Oil Company permission to carry out experimental drilling in areas just east of the median line represented a dangerous escalation because Beijing views any actual and unilateral drilling in disputed areas on the continental shelf as an encroachment into its maritime territory, and ‘an infringement of China’s rights and interests.’ This move by Tokyo in 2005 could be attributed to ‘growing pressure in Japan for the government to seek a tougher negotiation approach by using the test-drilling option as leverage’ but Ji warned less than a year later that ‘if the test-drilling takes place, the possibility of armed confrontation is not to be excluded’(Ji, 2006:1). Despite what they viewed as provocation by the Koizumi government, the PRC’s leaders still sought to manage the disputes in a way that prevented Chinese nationalist groups from hijacking and complicating the issue. In the same month as the Teikoku move for example, Chinese authorities raided the offices of the ‘China

Federation for Defending the Diaoyu Islands' in response to the organization's activities during the mass anti-Japan demonstrations in April 2005 (Fravel, 2010:153). At the public diplomatic level however, there was little or no substantial progress in addressing the ECS disagreements throughout 2005.

In September, Nakagawa announced to the media that the Chinese had in spite of Japanese objections started production activities at the *Tianwaitian (Kashi)* field in an area close to Japan's EEZ (Onishi and French, 2005). September had also seen one of the most dangerous incidents ever with regards to the East China Sea disputes. When a Japanese exploration expedition approached the *Chunxiao* field area, it was countered by a fleet of five PLAN vessels, including the advanced *Sovermenny* guided missile destroyer (Manicom, 2008a). The ships were observed by a Japanese patrol plane near the *Chunxiao* gas field. Worryingly, this was the first time that People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) warships were present in that area of the ECS with some reports stating that a Chinese navy vessel allegedly pointed its anti-aircraft cannon at a JMSDF's P3-C surveillance plane flying near the *Chunxiao* gas rig (Onishi and French, 2005;Curtain, 2005).

The seriousness of the September incident and the swift deterioration in approaches to the ECS disputes in the previous two years convinced decision-makers in both states of the urgency of stabilising the disagreements. At the end of September, the two governments renewed their attempts to iron out their ECS problems through diplomacy (*People's Daily*, 21/09/2005). The third round of bilateral ECS negotiations (the first in October

2004 and the second in May 2005) held from September 30<sup>th</sup> to October 1<sup>st</sup> took place amid an appreciation by both sides that the East China Sea was an issue which needed to be urgently addressed. A day before these discussions began however, the Chinese announced that they had set up a 'reserve vessel squadron' in the ECS (*AFP*, 29/09/2005). Beijing also declared that this squadron had the ability to fight wars and eliminate any possible obstacles at sea (Valencia, 2006:1). One of the sticking points of the late September/early October discussions was the Japanese request for geological data from China to ease their anxieties about possible siphoning. They also asked that Beijing order a halt of production and related activities in contested areas. In addition, Japan voiced its concerns about the activities of PLAN vessels but on a positive note, submitted a joint development proposal. While the data request was turned down, the Chinese agreed to carefully consider Japan's joint development ideas (Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 01/10/2005; Curtain, 2005).

A prolonged problem with the joint development concept has been the scope and exact location of such projects. During the October talks for example, Japan argued that joint development should include areas where the PRC believes it has incontrovertible rights such as the Chunxiao field which lies behind the controversial median line. Beijing suspected that the Japanese were attempting to corner the Chinese into indirectly accepting this dividing line by confining negotiations to Chunxiao and its environs without discussing demarcation vis-à-vis the Pinnacle Islands. China tried to counter this by arguing that any joint projects should be only confined to areas between the median line and the axis of the continental shelf (*Beijing Review*, 30/03/2006). Japan however

refused this out of hand on the grounds that they believed that Chunxiao or at least parts of it was certainly within Japan's EEZ and as such joint projects should also be considered in areas on the PRC's side of the median line (Pan, 2009:140). The lack of progress in negotiations and the sequence of events that resulted in the near miss of September may arguably have convinced Koizumi and his cabinet to replace the hawkish Nakagawa with a more China friendly politician, Toshihiro Nikai (Drifte, 2008b: 3). This was certainly a shrewd move with eventual positive consequences for the ECS problems. This was not to become apparent however until later with problems still persisting in the weeks immediately after Nikai's appointment.

Despite the obvious appreciation by the two neighbors in October 2005 of the urgent need to deal with or least manage the East China Sea disputes, the Chinese were dismayed by the stubbornness of the Japanese leadership with regards to dealing sensitively with the relationship and refraining from what they saw as harmful provocations. When Koizumi went to the Yasukuni shrine again on October 17<sup>th</sup> 2005, the Chinese Foreign Ministry suggested a few days later that there was little hope of a meeting between Japanese and Chinese leaders on the sidelines of the APEC summit in Pusan on November 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> 2005 (*China News Agency*, 25/10/2005). The appointment of the notoriously hawkish Taro Aso as Foreign Minister (October 2005 – August 2007) in late October may also have been interpreted by the Chinese leadership as a move which represented an unwillingness by Tokyo to sincerely repair bilateral relations or to carefully choreograph ties. This seemed to be confirmed by a number of offensive diplomatic gestures by Aso over the following months. For example, in December the

new Foreign Minister publicly declared that the PRC's military build-up was a threat to the security of the nation (*Japan Times*, 23/12/2005). In February 2006, Aso publicly recommended that Emperor Akihito should visit the Yasukuni shrine. He also contended that Taiwan's high educational achievements were a product of Japan's 50-year control of the island (1895-1945) and the 'enlightened' policies of the Japanese occupiers (*New York Times*, 13/02/2006). In terms of the ECS, Aso seemed to up the ante when he allegedly stated that 'Japan will never accept China's latest suggestion of jointly exploring the ECS resources and Japan might possibly take measures to confront China if it conducts gas and oil exploration in the ECS' (*BBC News*, 16/03/2006). By late 2005 and early 2006, while ties were not as bad as they had been from April to September 2005, diplomatic relations were still troubled by unfavorable political circumstances in each state, public outrage over the behavior of the other side, and lingering distrust and anger. These factors contributed to an atmosphere which was not conducive to reaching a conflict-prevention agreement or otherwise on the ECS anytime soon.

## **The Road to ‘Principled Consensus’: 2006 to 2008**

The New Year of 2006 saw some glimmers of hope on the horizon even though negative diplomatic gestures in the late 2005 and early 2006 period may not have indicated this. The aforementioned replacement of the nationalistic Nakagawa by a more cool-headed Toshihiro Nikai as METI minister on October 31<sup>st</sup> 2005 had a positive influence on calming the ECS frictions after the lows of 2005. One of Nikai’s first helpful moves in his new position was to terminate East China Sea exploration applications by Japanese energy companies and push for a negotiated approach. His visit to Beijing in February 2006 (February 22<sup>nd</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>) also pointed to a cautious attempt, particularly by China, to repair relations with regards to cases such as the ECS. It also symbolised an improvement because Nikai’s visit was the first by a senior high-level Japanese figure since Koizumi met Premier Wen Jiabao at a trilateral state meeting in Vientiane, Laos in November 2004 (*Asahi Shimbun*, 23/02/2006; *Zaobao*, 25/02/2006). The Chinese leadership acknowledged Japan’s positive gesture by ordering a halt in activities at the controversial *Chunxiao* gas field, which lay at the heart of the post-2002 disagreements (*Interfax*, 02/06/2006; *Zaobao*, 23/02/2006).

The ongoing shrine visits however meant that a more public rapprochement would have been more difficult to sell. This was evidenced on March 7<sup>th</sup> when the PRC’s Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing stated that the ‘continued visits by Japanese leaders to the war-

related Yasukuni Shrine were the top cause for Japan's strained political ties with the PRC' (*Kyodo*, 07/03/2006). On the more subtle diplomatic front however, considerable progress on the ECS was made in May when the two governments agreed to shelve their disagreements over the sea's demarcation because this would require too much time before being resolved to everyone's satisfaction. Instead, the two sides chose to negotiate the possibility of joint development (*Sankei Shimbun* 31/05/2006). Hu's strengthened position within the Party elite as Chinese leader also arguably favored a more constructive tackling of the points of contention in the East China Sea. It also permitted the General Secretary to guide the relationship and manage anti-Japanese sentiment in a more positive direction that would eventually see the 'new starting point' in relations after Koizumi stepped down as PM in September 2006 to be replaced by Shinzo Abe. Such subtle moves by Hu were illustrated in the summer and autumn period of 2006. His anti-corruption campaign of June would inadvertently result in outcomes that also reinforced his position. Hu's earlier elevation to the chairmanship of the CMC in March 2005 followed by his later promotion of ten senior officers to the rank of full general meant that his relationship with the military was further reinforced in the summer and autumn months of 2006 (Fewsmith, 2008: 270).

Behind the scenes, Hu's diplomatic manoeuvrings helped him to lead the country toward a new chapter in bilateral relations. His appointment of Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo as director of the CCP Central Office for Foreign Affairs allowed him to quietly set in motion a sequence of events with the Japanese Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Yachi Shotaro which resulted in Abe's symbolic trip to China in late 2006 and arguably

gradually paved the way for a more constructive management of frictions related to the ECS. Dai's role was politically weightier than Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing who assumed the public and less flexible and posturing face of Chinese diplomacy toward Japan (Hughes, 2008:267-268). Hu's manoeuvres were in a period when the next People's Congress (the 17<sup>th</sup> People's Congress) in the autumn of 2007 was beginning to emerge on the horizon. In this context Hu was eager to consolidate his position and begin to implement his policies in advance of a congress which would arguably define his leadership. This however would require Hu subtly asserting his authority more directly over the Jiang aligned Shanghai clique whose members still held powerful positions within the Party elite and continued to effectively run principal areas in the state, including the economically vital Shanghai region (Fewsmith, 2008: 269-270). With the Shanghai faction still a potential threat to his position, especially if he mishandled a key issue such as ECS-related controversies, Hu would have been very cautious about moving too quickly or making concessions to the Japanese in terms of an ECS resolution.

Hu's position within the elite vis-à-vis the Shanghai clique was assisted by the public disclosure in July 2006 of serious corruption over pension fraud within the city's Social Security Bureau. This revelation would snowball into a major political scandal. Subsequent investigations would result in the arrest, trial and sentencing of Chen Liangyu on September 24<sup>th</sup>, a Jiang favourite, faction top man, and a Politburo member since November 2002. The downfall of Chen, a perennial hindrance to Hu and Wen's directives, represented a major blow to the influence and standing of the faction within the Party. His fall was also seen as evidence that Jiang's influence within the elite was

dwindling (Fewsmith, 2008: 270-71). Hu's tighter grip on power vis-à-vis the Shanghai clique therefore stepped up a gear after Chen's removal. This move and Hu's later political reshuffling at the 17<sup>th</sup> party congress in October 2007 went a long way to resolving a long-running power struggle between the two most powerful political groupings within the CCP, the Shanghai gang under ex-president Jiang Zemin and the Communist Youth League (CYL) faction under Hu (Lam, 2008).

### The New Starting Point

Alongside this more favorable political situation for Hu and Wen, the repairing of bilateral ties and consequently more constructive approaches to the ECS problems was also greatly assisted by the end of Koizumi's reign as Japanese PM on September 26<sup>th</sup>. The situation was also helped by the new PM Abe's assurance to Hu, despite his nationalistic credentials, during a visit to China in early October, that he would handle the Yasukuni Shrine issue 'appropriately' (*Japan Times*, 09/10/2006). Even in advance of this reassurance, Hu was keen to assert his authority on the CCP's Japan policy. This was illustrated in the timing of his symbolic meeting with Abe during the PM's first summit visit to China literally hours after he had met with Party officials during the opening day of the 6<sup>th</sup> Plenary session of the CCP's 16<sup>th</sup> Central Committee on October 8<sup>th</sup>. Coverage of the Abe trip coincided with the much publicized arrest of Chen Liangyu in late September, a case which dominated debates within the elite and ordinary public. In this context, Abe's visit symbolized a 'new starting point' in China-Japan ties and the successful end of the power transition and power balancing from Jiang to Hu. In this

more favorable context, the General Secretary also utilized the state media to cleverly portray Abe's visit in a positive light, and to minimise and even ignore reporting of any news or controversies from Japan that could inflame passions in China (Hughes, 2008:268). Hu's new approach may have assisted in reducing the potential volatility of Japan-related issues such as the East China Sea disputes in terms of the anti-Japanese demonstrations that often followed them.

The ending of Koizumi's reign in September 2006, the successful establishment of a more firm power base by Hu Jintao, and the 'new starting point' in the same period was complemented by a gradual but noticeable reduction in the level of tensions surrounding the ECS disputes. This consequently had a knock-on effect in terms of the progress of negotiations and the manageability of problems. Further progress was made in November 2006 when Hu and Abe met on the sidelines of the fourteenth Economic Leaders' Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) held in Hanoi, Vietnam. On that occasion, the leaders agreed on a five point proposal aimed at 'creating a new situation' (Consulate General PRC/San Francisco, 19/11/2006).

Despite the evident upturn in relations by late 2006, ECS issues nonetheless remained on the radar but noticeably did not shake the relationship as violently as before. On October 27<sup>th</sup> for example, a group of Hong Kong activists attempted to land on the Pinnacle Islands but were prevented by the Japanese Coast Guard (JCG) (*International Herald Tribune*, 26/10/2006). A few days later, the PLAN carried out naval exercises in the ECS

(*Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 05/11/2006). The PRC also received complaints from Japan about a PRC vessel ‘intruding’ without notification near the Pinnacle Islands in February 2007. The Chinese Foreign Ministry retorted by saying that the ‘Chinese ship’s normal marine research in the waters near Diaoyu Island is an exercise of China’s legitimate sovereignty and has nothing to do with the informing mechanism’ (Jiang Yu, Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman, 07/02/2007).

The relatively swift improvement in public diplomatic ties since October 2006 however continued into 2007, and was best illustrated by Premier Wen Jiabao’s visit to Japan in April. This was the first visit by a Chinese leader to Japan in almost seven years (*Guardian*, 11/04/2007). The political reshuffling which took place at the CCP’s seventeenth Party Congress (October 15<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> 2007) also meant that Hu’s power base was in 2007 even more firmly established and consequently, the Chinese President, as contended by Swanstrom and Kokubun ‘could afford to react positively to the advent to a more pro-China leadership in Japan’ with the start of Yasuo Fukuda’s reign as Prime Minister in September 2007 (until September 2008) (Swanstrom and Kokubun, 2008: 2).

Hu’s firmer power base also arguably permitted him to take a harder line with regards to troublesome visits by Chinese nationalists to the Pinnacle Islands (*Asahi Shimbun*, 13/12/2007). In October for example, four members of the ‘China Federation for Defending the Diaoyu Islands’ who had unsuccessfully attempted to land on the islands were placed under house arrest by Chinese authorities after they returned to China (Fravel, 2010:153). Alongside these quiet behind the scenes endeavours to calm possible

ECS frictions, at the public level the visual optics of an improved and positive relationship continued apace. On November 28<sup>th</sup> 2007, a PLAN warship, the ‘*Shenzhen*’ became the first PRC vessel to visit Japan in the post-war era. The goodwill visit also served to show how defense exchanges were back on the bilateral agenda after a hiatus of nearly ten years (*Guardian*, 28/11/2007). In late December, Fukuda, with a family history of warm ties with China, and acknowledged as a sincere advocate of constructive relations, visited the PRC for a four-day trip. At the end of the trip Japanese diplomats commented that the two sides’ positions had “narrowed considerably” with some progress being made on the East China Sea (*AsiaNews.It*, 28/12/2007). Relations were now so improved that, in keeping with this upward trend, good relations persisted into 2008 with Hu Jintao making his first ever visit to Japan in May. The summit saw the two leaders, Hu and Fukuda, sign the ‘Joint Statement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the PRC on Comprehensive Promotion of a Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests.’ The strides made in the relationship from the depths of 2005 were shown in the successful signing of this document, only the fourth such agreement between the two neighbours since 1972 (*BBC News*, 07/05/2008). The devastating May 12<sup>th</sup> 2008 Sichuan earthquake had also witnessed a very generous response from Tokyo, and the search and rescue mission sent from Japan was also well received amongst ordinary and elite level Chinese (Li Xiushi, 03/09/2008).

## The Signing of the ‘Principled Consensus’ on the East China Sea

On June 18<sup>th</sup>, in what could be described as the apex of relations following the nadir of 2005 and co-related lows in the East China Sea, China and Japan agreed to a ‘principled consensus’ that would see the joint and co-operative development of part of the natural gas fields in the East China Sea (Zhou, 2008). On the day of the agreement, the two governments released a ‘Japan-China Joint Press Statement’ relating to co-operation in the ECS which read as follows:

*‘In order to make the East China Sea, where the sea boundary between Japan and China has not been delimited, a ‘Sea of Peace, Co-operation and Friendship,’ Japan and China have agreed, through serious consultations based on the common understanding between leaders of the two countries achieved in April 2007 as well as their new common understanding achieved in December 2007, that the two countries co-operate with each other without prejudice to the legal positions of both countries during the transitional period pending agreement on the delimitation and taken the first step to this end. Both countries will continue consultations further’ (Sakamoto, 2008: 115).*

The statement promised that the two governments would continue their discussions with the aim of achieving joint development in other areas of the ECS as soon as possible. The second section outlined some of the details of the landmark agreement regarding the *Chunxiao* gas field and stated:

*‘Chinese enterprises welcome that Japanese corporation(s) will participate, in accordance with Chinese laws regarding co-operation with foreign enterprises in the exploration and exploitation of off-shore*

*petroleum resources, in the development of the existing Shirakaba<sup>20</sup> (Chunxiao) oil and gas field*' (Sakamoto, 2008:115).<sup>21</sup>

The June 2008 agreement is a provisional measure without a detailed explanation regarding the specifics where the 'main purpose is to prevent contradictions arising from delimitation from being intensified' (Yu, 2007: 8). The importance of the symbolism of the agreement rather than its specifics was similarly not lost in newspapers like the *Japan Times* who noted the words of Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura when he stated that 'The agreement is a favourable example showing that the two countries can solve any difficulty through dialogue' but also noted that 'Japan and China have different stances, and negotiations will be extremely long (before a conclusion is reached)' (*Japan Times*, 19/06/2008).

Less than a week after the signing of the 'principled consensus', the November 2007 PRC ship visit to Japan was reciprocated by the landmark visit of the Japanese warship '*Sazanami*' on June 24<sup>th</sup> 2008, the first such visit by a Japanese warship in the history of Japan-PRC relations (Li Xiushi, 03/09/2008). In a display of how much bilateral ties had progressed since hitting rock bottom in 2005, China's Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei declared at a press conference in June 2008 that as (and if) relations improve then 'some sensitive issues can be easily resolved' where he expressed his belief that 'a breakthrough on the East China Sea issue' would open up the door to addressing 'other complex and

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<sup>20</sup> The Japanese name for the *Chunxiao* oil and gas field is used here because the above statement on the June 18<sup>th</sup> 2008 'principled consensus' is the Japanese version as used by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. See [http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/china/higashi\\_shina/press.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/china/higashi_shina/press.html)

<sup>21</sup>This is Sakamoto's translation into English of the Japanese version of the statement. See Sakamoto, 2008.

sensitive issues between the two nations.’ Observing the impact of post-2006 interactions on Beijing-Tokyo ties, Wu also commented in a report covered by *Xinhua News* in the aftermath of the June 2008 ‘principled consensus’, that ‘the stalemate in Sino-Japanese relations was broken in October 2006, and leaders of the two countries exchanged ‘ice-breaking’, ‘ice-thawing’, ‘spring-herald’ and ‘warm spring’ visits in succession.’ In the same article, Wu stressed that ‘the settlement of sensitive issues is a very important precondition to foster relations between nations’ and that ‘some historical issues like sovereignty dispute between China and Japan over the Diaoyu Islands should be addressed step by step, warning that any rush toward a resolution without mature consideration would damage the relationship’ (*China View*, 19/06/2008).

Despite the healing process that took gradual effect in late 2006 with the departure of Koizumi and Hu’s firmer grip of power, Cai notes the sensitive nationalist reaction in China following the ECS agreement of June 2008. Even though the atmosphere had improved, there were still many people in powerful positions who put pressure on Hu with regards to his approach to the ECS, particularly because the agreement envisioned joint and co-operative development work west of the median line. Numerous people used the issue for their own political objectives, and not only for nationalistic reasons, with some senior conservatives and ‘special quarters’ sending some critical and personal reports directly to the central government. According to Cai, the agreement of June 2008 to allow co-operative development inside an undisputable Chinese area is a problem for many Chinese. Nationalist feeling is still very strong he argues, and conflicting ideas exist on how to deal with Japan. Many complaints were conveyed via the internet by

nationalists upset at what they viewed as China granting too many concessions to the Japanese. The CCP responded with its own campaign on the internet and via the *People's Daily* challenging accusations of a sell-out by vehemently denying any concessions, and foreign ministry officials stating 'We still keep our legal claim to that area' (Cai Penghong, 05/09/2008). In the days after the East China Sea agreement, Hu also made an unprecedented appearance on the internet which lasted twenty minutes with the General Secretary stating 'I hope to better understand the opinions and suggestions internet users have of the party and government's work' (*BBC News*, 20/06/2008).

The successful negotiation of the largely symbolic 'principled consensus' was certainly indicative of the changed domestic political circumstances in the two countries. In China in particular, Hu's consolidated power after mid to late 2006 gave him the leeway to guide the relationship in a more constructive direction. This eventually helped to create an atmosphere where the formulation of a bilateral consensus on the ECS that complimented the PRC's rational strategy towards Japan was made politically feasible. It also illustrated the extent to which ties could be symbolically improved and repaired if willing political leaders and positive diplomatic gestures were evident. The Chinese government's campaign to sell the June 2008 agreement to its people and to the PRC's political circles however was indicative of its recognition of the depth of feeling surrounding nationalistic themes such as Japan in the PRC and also of the fact that public opinion and popular sentiment at all levels could not be ignored and needed to be addressed and guided in a favorable direction. In the month of the agreement for example, the *Japan Times* noted that 'For Chinese and Japanese diplomats ... one

lingering concern is how the Chinese public will react to the apparent concessions made by their government' and where even top Foreign Ministry officials in Japan had claimed that 'the Chinese side is apparently worried about how China's various interest groups will react if the government is perceived as having conceded too much to Japan on the EEZ issue' (*Japan Times*, 19/06/2008).

### **Summary Survey of Perspectives and Opinions in China**

The following is a summary survey of personal perspectives from a varied field of middle elites in the PRC. The opinions expressed suggest that the resurgence of the East China Sea tensions from 2003 to 2008 cannot be viewed in isolation but rather must be viewed in the context of the health of the wider Sino-Japanese relationship.

#### **Jin Xide, Deputy Director, Institute of Japanese Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) on 20/11/2007.**

These tensions are all about the bilateral relationship, and are first and foremost a political and not an economic issue where a key problem is '*not oil and gas but rather a mentality*' where in particular the Japanese have a mentality that cannot accept China's rise. According to Jin, the shift in Japanese attitudes towards China can be linked to the relative decline in the Japanese economy and the simultaneous rise of China. In the 1980s for example, Jin states that Japan was eager to help China to develop, especially in the field of energy. The situation has totally changed however in recent years where '*the Japanese mind cannot accept the reality of over passing by China.*' For Jin, the Japanese reaction to China's exploration activities in the ECS in 2003 and beyond and the '*bad political relationship between Japan and China*' says a lot about how Japan perceives China. Providing examples, Jin cites notable contributions to the politicisation of these maritime disagreements, including '*Japanese politicians and news reporters reporting and distorting the facts*' where for example Japanese people are not aware that Chinese developments are taking place within '*an area of no dispute*' and that accusations of siphoning have no foundation (Jin Xide, 20/11/2007).

**Cai Penghong, Senior Fellow and Professor, Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, Shanghai Academy of Social Studies (SASS) on 04/12/2007.**

Cai Penghong contends that many Chinese are concerned about Japan's desire to be a normal nation where there is a fear that if Japan develops militarily then it will try to contain China because *'right-wingers in Japanese politics want to contain China.'* At present there is not containment of China by Japan but in the ECS, Cai claims, *'Japan is trying to claim what is not theirs.'* Cai also states that relations were not good under Koizumi, and *'in such circumstances, small things can start a big spark'* particularly when Chinese perceptions of Japan as still being aggressive seemed true as a result of a host of controversial issues (Cai Penghong, 04/12/2007).

**Xue Chen, Research Fellow, Department of Strategic Studies, Shanghai Institute for International Studies, on 03/09/2008.**

Xue Chen likewise expressed prevailing views in China by stating that Japanese people are also easily moved by right-wing political leaders in Japan who want to argue that China wants to dominate the region. Such scare-mongering, he claims, assists some Japanese in shaking off its *'defeated nation complex'*, and makes calls for a *'normal state'* and an upgrading of military capabilities more compelling. In this regard, Chen argues that Japan has a defeated nation complex due to a post-1945 mentality and the US military's presence in Japan. However recent Japanese attempts to shake off this complex unnerves the Chinese, particularly Japan's quest to be a normal state, manifested by its desire for a UNSC seat, the upgrading of the JSDF, and a move towards a more independent and assertive defense posture. These worrying strategic moves by Japan since the mid-1990s were matched by a heightened awareness among Chinese citizens of Japan's denial of its aggression in the past, most notably denials concerning the notorious Nanking massacre of 1937. In Chen's opinion, *'the Japanese public know what really happened but they deny it'* and this in part, explains why the Japanese have a complex over China's rise. He claims therefore that national identities and historical animosity play a very important role in indirectly influencing the ECS disputes, and do a lot to explain the reasons why Tokyo and Beijing do not want to be perceived to be yielding national interests to the other side (Xue Chen, 03/09/2008).

**Cheng Xiaohe, Professor, School of International Studies, Renmin University of China, on 19/09/2008.**

Cheng Xiaohe's corresponding views of the role of identities on the disputes is similarly telling with regards to predominant Chinese views. Before the 1990s, he states that Japan was used to a weak, poor and sometimes divided China. As a result, the PRC tolerated and froze sensitive issues because it needed Japan. In the 1990s and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the situation changed substantially however, particularly in the economic field. Relations therefore between Japan and China experienced a significant change. In a relatively short

time, Cheng argues that roles changed or were at least threatened, and suddenly both sides were not comfortable with the new situation. From the Japanese viewpoint, '*China was no longer weak and pliant.*' From the Chinese perspective, concerns were created by Japan's desire for power through normality. For the first time in one hundred and fifty years of relations, both countries faced a new unprecedented situation that they were not familiar with. The bilateral approach to territorial disputes is just one aspect of this change which Cheng refers to as a '*transitional period.*' The ECS disputes are, as a result, tied to history and prevailing attitudes towards the other state and remain '*a big emotional issue.*' The protests and demonstrations that were a hallmark of 1996 and 2005 evidenced the salience of historical grievances to a whole range of issues of which the East China Sea was just one. Cheng supports the view that the June 2008 pact was a very public statement that relations were back on track after the deterioration caused during Koizumi's reign, a situation that was not in the interests of Japan or China. The agreement was a product of developments begun as soon as Koizumi left office, with Cheng noting that Hu Jintao sent a personal envoy secretly to Japan to restart positive relations with Abe in the weeks after Koizumi's departure in September 2006. Cheng attributes this to the fact that when historical and ideational factors are not allowed to disrupt the diplomatic relationship then attitudes and approaches tend to be positive. There is also an understanding by both states of the practical benefits of co-operation where both realise the need to resolve a problem in which the Chinese and Japanese '*have a convergent interest.*' While the June 2008 agreement has not completely resolved the disputes and has only partially dealt with issues, its significance, Cheng argues, lies in the fact that it symbolises a much needed improvement, as illustrated by the joint statements made and that it has paved the way for future progress on a once seemingly intractable issue (Cheng Xiaohe, 19/09/2008).

**Zhu Feng, Deputy Director, Professor, School of International Studies, Center for International and Strategic Studies, Peking University on 22/09/2008.**

Zhu Feng notes the import of a positive atmosphere when seeking forward movement in these disputes, observing that the ice age period of 2001 to 2006 was seen as a very unstable time in the relationship, and where the ECS disputes became like a '*symbol of competition*' between the two countries and this was largely due to ideational factors such as national identity and intensified historical animosity. While not arguing (in 2008) that the bilateral relationship will turn back to the bad old days, Zhu sees a '*lingering problem*' in the relationship that slows its progress, a characteristic that has '*much to do with the psychological and cognitive*' aspects of how both peoples understand each other. Controversial issues, he contends, are often treated with an air of panic and it is not easy to get the relationship on a steady course. Both countries are very similar but at the same time very different where even though social contact between the two is extensive, hatred, mistrust and bias is still very strong. Koizumi was also seen as a stubborn trouble-maker who persisted in visiting the Yasukuni shrine, and was, in Zhu's opinion, a maverick populist who appealed to nationalist groups and used the visits for his own domestic political benefits by exploiting nationalist feelings and sentiments to bolster support and defeat his political opponents. In this aim, he was successful but it was

problematic because its price was a serious deterioration in relations with China. On the road to the June agreement, symbolic events and positive interactions had served to clear the air and to improve public attitudes, particularly in the case of Chinese attitudes towards Japan. Koizumi's successor, Shinzo Abe, realised he was not able to attract the kind of support that his predecessor enjoyed so he modified Koizumi's policy. Abe quickly tried to stabilise relations and he succeeded to some extent by initiating the so-called process of '*icebreaking*' between the two nations. This provided both sides with the opportunity to find an agreement of some sort to stabilise the relationship again. The Chinese government was also anxious to improve relations because '*a deterioration would undermine China's foreign policy and global strategy.*' Due to this improvement, Hu Jintao could afford to be less emotional about issues, and Abe, and later Fukuda, in particular, proved to be more pragmatic about relations. The two years prior to the June 2008 agreement have therefore seen a returning to a more normal relationship between the two Asian powers (Zhu Feng, 22/09/2008).

**Sun Xuefeng, Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, Tsinghua University, on 17/09/2008.**

According to Sun Xuefeng, the emotions stirred by the East China Sea disputes with Japan stimulate Chinese nationalism and this might explain why Beijing adopts an assertive official policy in its government and public statements. This assertiveness is welcomed by Japanese elites and conservatives who use it to cite Chinese aggression and to support Japan's quest and need to be a normal state with sufficient defence flexibility to deal with China. This strategy of stimulating China, Sun argues, does a lot to explain why Koizumi visited the Yasukuni shrine (Sun Xuefeng, 17/09/2008).

**Yang Bojiang, Professor, Director, Institute of Japanese Studies, China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), on 24/09/2008.**

Yang Bojiang weighs in on the issue of domestic pressures. During the worst periods of the ECS tensions, he claims that there was a conflict of sorts between the two states' nationalisms, a fact that some scholars avoid talking about. At the worst point of the ECS disputes in 2005, there was an obvious overlap of several conflicting factors including the Yasukuni shrine issue since 2001, the history textbook issue, anti-Japanese demonstrations, and Japan's call for a permanent UNSC seat in 2005. There was real anger in both countries towards the other side, and the ECS tensions, Yang argues, were one piece in a jigsaw of bilateral tensions and problems. A conflict of interests over oil and gas deposits, were, of course, factors but they did not top the list in understanding the extent of these frictions. In fact, in terms of tensions, energy competition in the ECS is perhaps at the bottom of the list of causes, standing maybe in fourth or fifth place. Rather, Yang's contention is that domestic political considerations in both states played a major role in contributing positively or negatively to the maritime disagreements. Yang continues by accepting that one could argue that domestic politics have a significant influence on all inter-state relations including those with the US and South-east Asia. For

China however, relations with Japan *'are something special.'* He also states that even though Japanese people often wonder why people in China are so sensitive about Japan, one must appreciate that *'the invasion and occupation of China by Japan was harsh, broad and long'* so any disagreement or disputes with Japan is regarded as a very sensitive matter for ordinary Chinese citizens. Yang asserts that Japan and Taiwan are two issues that can easily stir Chinese emotions, and any domestic political decisions taken on sensitive issues must bear this strongly in mind (Yang Bojiang, 24/09/2008).

**Ji Guoxing, Professor, Center of RimPac Studies, School of International and Public Affairs, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, on 05/12/2007.**

Ji Guoxing reiterated a commonly held belief amongst scholars in China by claiming that ultra-nationalists in Japan are *'pushing their media stories'* concerning China, where nationalistic groups, along with persons of influence including politicians can play *'a determined role in manipulating Japanese public opinion'* and seek to *'mislead the innocent public.'* The accusations of siphoning of Japanese resources by the PRC are a cogent example of this. Ji states that he personally checked the possibility of this with geologists who argued that it was impossible beyond 100 meters. The siphoning story therefore *'is pure propaganda and has no substance to it'* (Ji Guoxing, 05/12/2007).

**Yu Tienjun, General Secretary, Associate Professor, School of International Studies (SIS), Center for International and Strategic Studies, Peking University on 22/09/2008.**

Noting the gradual improvement in relations under Japanese Prime Ministers Abe, and Fukuda in particular, Yu Tienjun states that the visits to the Yasukuni shrine by Koizumi were viewed as an insult and as unacceptable to most Chinese and *'under such circumstances, it was hard to tackle specific issues.'* Yasuo Fukuda, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's successor in September 2007 was very different however in his approach to China. Fukuda was well-liked in China, made a determined effort not to offend Chinese feelings, and was very pragmatic in his dealings with Beijing. He was, according to Yu, *'old-fashioned in dealing with China'*, and was not a performer for the Japanese public and media. Koizumi however *'liked the mass media and liked a performance.'* The 2001 to 2006 era also marked a shift away from diplomatic practices of past decades by Tokyo and Beijing. Under Abe and Fukuda, there was a tangible improvement in relations and as such, specific and often complicated issues could be talked about again. The broader context of the relationship therefore linked directly to the approach to specific and sensitive issues such as in the ECS where Yu asserted that *'if the general context is bad then crisis management to deal with 'incursions', near-miss incidents, research ships etc. is also poor and thus the danger of trouble is more likely'* (Yu Tienjun, 22/09/2008).

**Joint interview: Wang Hanling, Professor, Director, Research Base for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (BOALOS), Center for International Law and the National Institute of Law, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), and Liu Nanlai,, Professor, Center for International Law and the National Institute of Law, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) on 16/09/2008.**

Despite the challenges evident within the relationship, Wang Hanling and Liu Nanlai nonetheless maintain that *‘allowing the Japanese to jointly develop the Chunxiao oil field shows the good faith of the Chinese side, and shows that it wants to settle the final boundaries of the East China Sea’* and while *‘China has compromised, it has done so in a manner that does not jeopardise the Chinese position overall’* (Wang Hanling, 16/09/2008; Liu Nanlai, 16/09/2008).

### Summary

This sample survey of a number of influential elites from a wide variety of fields exemplifies the depth of feeling in the PRC vis-à-vis Japan-related and sovereignty-related issues such as the East China Sea. It also reflects broad themes and commonalities between the interviewees, and their perceptions of who and what was responsible for the aggravation of tensions in the ECS. In the context of the August 19<sup>th</sup> 2003 to June 18<sup>th</sup> 2008 period, the survey also reveals how factors such as historical controversies and national identity, when considered alongside discussed domestic politics, electoral strategizing in Japan, elite competition within the PRC, and so forth influenced popular sentiment and the manner in which public and elite level Chinese interpreted the statements and actions of the Japanese in the ECS.

## **Japan**

### **Unfavourable Conditions: 2001 – 2003**

#### Koizumi enters the stage

When Junichiro Koizumi commenced his tenure as Prime Minister of Japan in April 2001, he had to address a strong desire amongst the Japanese public for robust and decisive leadership and for a more assertive defense of Japan's interests after a decade of perceived Japanese weakness and indecision on the foreign and domestic front. At the forefront of Koizumi's objectives was a more determined streamlining of the decision-making process and the untangling of the restrictions placed on effective governance by loyalty to political factions. In this regard, the new PM wanted to properly complete the reform process begun in 1993 so that Japan would no longer be weakened by a crippled and divided leadership. The public's support for Koizumi and his political goals was highlighted in the days after he set up his first cabinet with opinion polls by Japan's major broadsheets displaying a high level support for the new PM (*Asahi Shimbun*, 27-28/04/2001; 30/04/2001).

The new PM was post-war Japan's first political leader and party president to be chosen who was independent of the traditional factional power struggles, having been elected by the vast majority of the LDP's local branches, bypassing faction leaders. This overwhelming show of support provided Koizumi with the necessary political leverage to choose his own senior party leaders and cabinet. He was also seen as a kind of outsider

maverick who could possibly cure Japan's ills after a decade of relative decline in every field with comparisons being made with Yasuhiro Nakasone, Prime Minister from 1982 to 1987 during the height of Japan's post-war power and prestige. His relationship with the Japanese bureaucracy was similarly weak so relying heavily on public support for decision-making was an essential element of his political calculations (Shinoda, 2007:89-90).

His elevation to the post of PM was also heavily influenced by the earlier 1993-1994 electoral reforms. Political pundits expected that Ryutaro Hashimoto, a former PM, would assume the Presidency of the Party (and consequently become PM) in April 2001 because of his strong power base. However, the post-1993 single-seat system within constituencies encouraged often younger LDP parliamentarians to demand a more democratic system when choosing the Party's President. These calls bore fruit with reforms in 2001 and played a major part in contributing to Koizumi's election as President over the heads of more powerful factional figures such as Hashimoto (Cooney, 2007:87). In the absence of strong factional support for his candidacy, Koizumi relied on more popular support from individual parliamentarians and Party members. This meant that the new Prime Minister was not severely constrained by factional politics in Japan at a time when the traditional opposition, the Japanese left wing, was also in a relatively weak state in terms of parliamentary representation. This arguably permitted a populist and domestically orientated approach which affected relations with China because it saw the Japanese leadership frequently embrace populist themes which, even if unintentional, damaged bilateral relations (Shibuichi, 2005:210).

Shibuichi for example contends that Koizumi appreciated how valuable the support of the rightist pressure group, the Japan Association of Bereaved Families (JABF), could prove to be as PM. Given his pre-election cost-cutting reform pledges aimed at shaking up the under-performing Japanese economy, the new PM realized that his strategies would upset numerous other powerful LDP-friendly groups in construction, postal services, finance, and so forth within the country. As such, if he played his cards right, Koizumi knew that the highly influential JABF might be one of the few such domestic organizations whose support he could depend on. As with Nakasone in the 1980s, he also understood the political utility of symbolic gestures and slogans to pull disparate groups and the Japanese public behind him. Examples of the very popular Koizumi appealing to slogans rather than policy details included ‘I visit the Yasukuni Shrine regardless of what happens’, ‘Our enemies are the vested interest groups within’ (*teiko-seiryoku*), and ‘Reform the structure of the Japanese economy’ (*kozo-kaikaku*) (Shibuichi, 2005:210). This extended to his decision to visit the Yasukuni shrine for the domestic political dividends to be gained in spite of the injury the visits caused to bilateral ties with China.

The controversy had a negative impact on approaches to the East China Sea problems, and stemmed largely from Koizumi’s stubborn refusal to cease his continuing visits to the nationalistic shrine. As Shirk notes, when the Japanese PM paid his official respects at the shrine for a second time in the spring of 2002, ‘no amount of back-stage managing by Chinese diplomats could stem the media and internet backlash.’ Jiang Zemin, after suggesting to his colleagues in the elite that he had received an assurance from Koizumi

that he would not visit Yasukuni again, was also humiliated by the second shrine trip (*Kyodo*, 29/04/2002). Following this, the Japanese PM was never invited to the PRC again (Shirk, 2008:169).

Following the normalization of China-Japan relations in 1972 the so-called ‘Tanaka faction’ became the LDP’s ‘most Beijing-friendly’ grouping, and played a very powerful role in LDP intra-party decision making. Koizumi’s consolidation of power after 2001 however meant an even further weakening of this faction’s influence since the reforms of the early 1990s. It also permitted Koizumi to adopt a more assertive stand against China on a number of specific issues while simultaneously strengthening the US-Japan alliance (Taniguchi, 2005:445), a move, alongside other negative approaches to sensitive Japan-China issues, which served to further undermine Beijing’s confidence in Tokyo’s sincerity. As highlighted by a Japanese scholar, the Tanaka faction, a faction that had always had a more conciliatory approach towards the Chinese government, was subsequently broken up and former members were obliged to follow Koizumi’s policies or else retire or remove themselves from the center of power. The basis of the Tanaka faction’s China policy was the improvement of economic ties. Koizumi was not satisfied with previous more conciliatory approaches to China and called for a more assertive stand (Hiroshi Nakanishi, 11/11/2008).

It would be wrong nonetheless to explain the ice age in relations from 2001 to 2006 or the post-2002 East China Sea frictions as a consequence of the policies and actions of one person. As Li asserts, Koizumi’s domestic and foreign policy moves merely ‘deepened

the already latent mistrust.’ There were for example a combination of factors involved in understanding the bilateral tensions that contributed to a deterioration in the ECS disputes including ‘the unprecedented upgrade in Japan-Taiwan relations, Japan’s lobbying for a UNSC seat in 2004-05, the Yasukuni shrine visits, the ‘nationalisation’ of the Diaoyu Islands with the arrest of Chinese ‘civil’ demonstrators on the islands, and defensive JMSDF military manoeuvres near the islands. These were all ‘major factors that deteriorated the Sino-Japanese relationship’ where from the Chinese perspective, much could be explained by Japan being unaccustomed to China’s rise (Li Xiushi, 03/09/2008). Despite not being solely responsible for all these actions, Koizumi’s own stances on key issues such as Taiwan, history, and Japan’s security policy indicated to the PRC leadership that he was comfortable and willing to offend the Chinese if the demands of domestic politics required it (Self, 2002:80). This perception extended to the East China Sea disagreements.

On the bureaucratic front, Japan’s China policy was until the second half of the 1990s under the guardianship of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), a ministry ‘keen to protect the increasingly fragile relationship from several negative domestic influences over which it had no control’ (Drifte, 2008b:18). These included the history textbook issue and similar other sensitive issues that related to how Japan addressed its past in ways that were seen as unacceptable to Japan’s neighbors (Drifte, 2008b:18). By 2001 and in years immediately following it however, the MOFA’s influence in formulating security planning had been gradually undermined by political and bureaucratic competition where a number of highly publicized corruption scandals and in-fighting

between ministers and officials hurt public confidence in the MOFA. The most prominent of these scandals involved the former Foreign Minister Makiko Tanaka (April 2001 – January 2002), a Beijing-friendly politician, and daughter of former PM Kakuei Tanaka (Berkofsky, 2002).

A consequence of all these scandals was that the MOFA, bureaucratically strong but ‘traditionally weak in the political system’ was ‘pilloried by the media and political parties, lost key personnel’, and was often ‘left debilitated by the policy-making process.’ The ministry was also heavily criticized and perceived as weak publicly after allegations in the late 1990s and early 2000s surfaced that it had appeased North Korea with regards to the abductions issue, where DPRK agents had kidnapped numerous Japanese civilians from 1977 to 1983 (Hughes, 2004:60). Under Koizumi, the MOFA, so used to dominating national security discussions for decades, witnessed a considerable erosion of its influence on government policy. From 2001 therefore, there was a ‘power shift from the MOFA to the *Kantei* (a metonym for the PM’s office) in the area of foreign and defense affairs.’ This change meant that it was now easier for a Japanese Prime Minister to follow a foreign policy approach that complemented his particular political needs and interests (Shinoda, 2007:85;134;143). Another negative change for bilateral ties at the turn of the new millennium was that one could not now openly take action against the more powerful and younger generation anti-China faction in government. Long held connections were also weakened as Chinese old guards simultaneously lost their influence, and a new ‘much more severe’ type of media evolved in Japan (Hiroshi Nakanishi, 11/11/2008). Koizumi’s post-2000 reforms further helped to upset an already

fragile domestic political arrangement in the post-normalisation *modus operandi* between the two capitals. This complicated the choreography and manageability of approaches to the East China Sea.

Observing the consequences of these above changes and the weakening of the MOFA's influence, Kokubun noted, 'Gone are the days when Foreign Ministry bureaucrats and special envoys alone could quickly resolve sensitive incidents' (Kokubun, 2005). For example, when the Yasukuni shrine issue arose again in 2001 under Koizumi after a hiatus of five years, Beijing presumed that quiet behind the scenes diplomacy would resolve it as in the case of Prime Ministers Nakasone (in 1985) and Ryutaro Hashimoto (in 1996) when they visited the shrine but this would not be the case, to the detriment of bilateral relations between 2001 and 2006 (Yoshi Nakai, 23/10/2008).

These above factors, along with the various negative interactions leading up to 2005 all served to support, from the Chinese perspective, the views of those in China who believed Japan to be a threat to China's interests in the ECS. Appreciating the harmful impact of the shrine visits on relations for example, Wan writing in 2006 asserted that Koizumi's repeated annual visits since 2001 'challenged what the Chinese government considers to be a core political understanding between the two nations', where crucially, the visits 'also eroded the ability of those Chinese analysts and officials who have openly advocated a softer line on Japan' (Wan, 2006:261). One observer commented that the ECS tensions reached their most difficult stage in 2005 and were 'sometimes even hot' because Koizumi operated more to the very idea of political strategy rather than the

national benefit. His visits to the Yasukuni shrine did not affect ECS negotiations directly per se, but they did seem to reflect Koizumi's public attitude towards China. The impact of this on the Chinese mindset towards maritime discussions was that it convinced many Chinese that Koizumi's political stand on the Yasukuni shrine visits for example would also be mirrored by his political strategy towards Beijing. This would mean a unilateral and idealistic pursuit of Japanese interests in the ECS rather than the pragmatic and realistic strategy based on compromise (Zheng Donghui, 18/09/2008).

#### Popular and Elite level Sentiment toward China

In attempting to place the shrine visits from the perspective of many Japanese after 2000, one Japanese scholar argued that the Prime Minister utilised a strong posture towards China as a political tool to garner support where the Yasukuni issue was seen by ordinary Japanese as a strong attitude towards a rising China. Many experts in Japan agreed that Koizumi's primary motivation regarding the shrine were based on personal convictions and political promises rather than any anti-Chinese sentiment on his part. Nonetheless, the issue was evidence of a perceived need by right-wing Japanese to tackle frustration about Japan's position and decline. Japanese people are also more concerned about an increase in militarily assertive behaviour by the PRC in the ECS and beyond in places like the South China Sea. This prevailing perception influenced the mood among numerous lawmakers and bureaucrats who asked themselves 'why should Japan make

any concessions to a militarily assertive but non-transparent China?’ (Aki Mori, 12/11/2008).

This was also in a context where since the 1990s, numerous LDP politicians began to embrace nationalist agendas such as constitutional revision, a UN Security Council seat, territorial sovereignty, and the revival of Japan’s national economy to stimulate political and voter support (Zheng, 2006:6). According to Green, special interest groups exerted themselves more forcefully and decisively as the traditional groups began to lose their ability to discipline them. Such groups ‘skewed’ Japan’s relations with neighbours like China and North Korea in ways that the LDP and the MOFA could not control. Consequently, ‘Tokyo’s foreign policy process is less hierarchical, less predictable, more entrepreneurial, and more driven by a mass media which has resulted in the fact that unpopular foreign policy is much harder to promote within Japan.’ Japanese prime ministers and leading politicians are therefore more constrained by domestic pressures in their foreign policy negotiations over issues such as the ECS disputes because they are less able to take unpopular stands on foreign policy issues and are more vulnerable to special interest pressure and media criticism (Green, 2003:74).

On the Japanese home front, the first years of the new millennium did not point to an atmosphere that was conducive to constructive engagement with the Chinese. A 2002 public opinion survey by Japan’s largest newspaper, the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, suggested even stronger support for an assertive stance by Koizumi toward China. The poll’s results

noted that only 37.3% of the correspondents believed that Japan could trust its large neighbour. This was the first time that such results fell below 50% (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, 11/09/2002). Increasingly negative public sentiments extended to Japanese political circles with naked expressions of anti-Chinese feelings sentiment becoming mainstream and manifesting themselves in vocal and physical support for the shrine visits, advocacy for a stronger line on Taiwan, calls for tough defense measures against China, and arguments in favor of more severe ODA cuts (Self, 2002:80).

The Shenyang Incident in May 2002, when Chinese police entered the grounds of the Japanese consulate to intercept fleeing North Korean refugees, was yet another episode in a long list of incidents since the 1990s that seemed to confirm Japanese concerns over the Chinese ‘disrespect’ for what is, in diplomatic terms, sovereign Japanese territory. This was, in the words of Nakanishi, ‘another epoch making incident’ because China did not follow international practice in respecting the rights of the Japanese General Consul and some Japanese officials were seen to be too weak in their responses to China. From that point onwards, China-friendly Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) officials or the so-called ‘China school’ were seen as weak and pathetic, and became a target of denunciation by the Japanese right-wing and media. Groups such as the China school became much more observed and could not function freely as a result. This was mainly due to often serious media attacks at the time against pro-China groups and individuals who were ‘openly attacked as an enemy within.’ Security-orientated officials were thus not so comfortable with such groups but still they functioned together. Views became more severe after incidents such as that in Shenyang. In the wider sense, according to

Nakanishi, this was set in the midst of a perception change of China in Japan that had considerably worsened with Jiang Zemin's controversial visit to Japan in 1998. In the Koizumi years however, tensions which may have been averted or dealt with privately were allowed to worsen or left to fester like a very public open wound (Hiroshi Nakanishi, 11/11/2008).

### The East China Sea disputes re-surface

When the ECS tensions flared-up in 2003, matters were much more complex than in previous decades, most notably because of the intermingling of a number of sensitive issues and unfavourable political circumstances which, as previously discussed, had placed a considerable strain on the relationship. At the public and political level in Japan, conditions were not optimal for understanding China's perspectives on the ECS, and for de-politicising otherwise technical disputes. Indeed, such was the predominance of negative perceptions of China in Japan, almost any action by the PRC in the East China Sea, was construed as a threat or an act that endangered Japan's interests and sovereignty (Xue Chen, 03/09/2008).

The reawakened shrine visits controversy alongside a collection of negative diplomatic gestures in the political and security fields served to undermine the possibility of positive relations even more. Koizumi also insisted that he would continue to visit the shrine at a time when historical atrocities by Japan were being watered down in some school

textbooks. These interactions, according to Tsunekawa, meant that the ECS issue ‘became bigger than it really was.’ Japanese newspapers for example were awash with reports of secret extractions from Japan’s EEZ, and of China monopolising the sea’s resources. ‘Japanese people were stunned’ as a result of these reports and the disputes became ‘excessively politicised on both sides.’ As a consequence of this action-reaction pattern between China and Japan during this ice age period, the ECS dispute attracted more attention than usual (Keiichi Tsunekawa, 15/10/2008).

In 2003 the PRC began to develop the Chunxiao field, with Japan responding by making a fanfare in the mass media with newspapers declaring that China was encroaching upon Japan’s EEZ (Ji Guoxing, 05/12/2007). Highly publicized ECS incidents included the unsuccessful June 23<sup>rd</sup> attempt by 13 Chinese activists to land on the Pinnacle Islands after being prevented by the JCG. This was followed two months later by a successful Japanese landing by members of the *Nihon Seisensha* (Japan Youth Federation) group (Blanchard, 2006: 220). Despite the very public tensions surrounding the ECS, the Japanese government took decisive measures to prevent a recurrence of such incidents by taking the islands out of private ownership and into state control. 2003 thus marked the last year in which Japanese nationalists were able to successfully land on the islands. The Chinese however perceived the move differently and viewed it in a context of seeming insensitivity by the Japanese government to their interests and concerns (Fravel, 2010:152-53).

From the Japanese perspective, the PRC's decision to jointly develop the Chunxiao field (near the median line) and other ECS fields with major oil and gas companies Royal-Dutch Shell and Unocal on August 19<sup>th</sup> represented a major escalation in the ECS problems (Zha, 2008) because the Japanese saw the move as a violation of international law and a worrying deviation from the usual exploration activities in the East China Sea. The Japanese and their media also responded with concern to reports in November 2003 that a surfaced PLAN Ming-class submarine with flag hoisted had sailed through the Osumi Strait between Kyushu and Tanegashima in southern Japan (*SinoDefence.com*, 2009).

## **The Relationship Hits Rock-Bottom: 2004 – 2005**

### **Japan Runs Out of Patience**

Other incidents in maritime areas in the early New Year of 2004 such as the ramming of two Chinese fishing vessels by the JMSDF on January 15<sup>th</sup> near the Pinnacle Islands (*SinoDefence.com*, 2009) and an illegal landing by seven Chinese activists in March (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, 05/10/2004) exacerbated Japanese fears regarding Chinese intentions in the area. Tokyo must also have felt snubbed by Beijing's apparent lack of appreciation for the fact that the Japanese had merely deported the March activists when it would have been within their rights to charge them (Roy, 2005:199). The following month, Tokyo

stationed two JCG boats near the islands in order to strengthen their ability to prevent landings by both Chinese and Japanese nationalists (Fravel, 2010:152).

On April 23<sup>rd</sup>, a bus belonging to a Japanese nationalist group rammed into the Chinese consulate in Osaka to protest China's claims to the ECS islands (*SinoDefence.com*, 2009). In a paper on the ECS in May 2006, Ji, identifying the period after April 2004 as particularly significant, stated that 'the present jurisdictional delimitation dispute in the East China Sea between China and Japan has been much politicized and sensationalised.' This has been especially the case since late May 2004 when the Japanese mass media's reaction to reports and updates concerning the Chunxiao gas field 'spread like wild fire' with newspapers in Japan publishing articles which argued that the PRC's exploitation of this field 'oversteps the median line', 'encroaches upon Japan's maritime rights and interests in its exclusive economic zone', and 'siphons off resources that may lie under Japan-claimed waters' (Ji, 2006:1). Evidence suggests that influential Japanese nationalists made the most of this frenzied tide of ECS related emotion in Japan. For example, in May, the well-known Japanese nationalist scholar Shigeo Hiramatsu flew over the *Chunxiao* gas field and wrote a highly publicised article on the construction of a natural gas extraction rig in the area (*Tokyo Shimbun*, 28/05/2004). A month later, METI Minister Shoichi Nakagawa, in what China regarded as an escalatory development, told reporters that Japan would survey undersea resources in the East China Sea. The next day, on June 30<sup>th</sup>, the Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs Chen Guofeng summoned the Japanese ambassador to the PRC to protest Japanese undersea survey plans (Przystup, 2004:9).

On July 6th, a JASDF plane spotted a Chinese maritime research ship operating without prior notification in Japan's EEZ compelling the Japanese Embassy in Beijing to ask the Chinese authorities for an explanation. The following day, the Japanese commenced survey activities in the ECS within what they saw as Japan's EEZ (Przystup, 2004:9). This involved the chartering of a Norwegian research vessel to map the sea bed. The move elicited strong protests from the Chinese side who viewed it as violation of their EEZ (*Asahi Shimbun*, 08/07/2004). By August, PRC workers were making progress in the construction of an undersea pipeline to gas fields in an area contested by Japan with Chief Cabinet Hiroiyuki Hosoda declaring that Tokyo had 'grave concerns' over China's activities in the ECS (*Latelinenews.com*, 28/08/2004).

Concurrently, the visceral anti-Japanese sentiment expressed at the Asian Cup in the same month (discussed earlier) and aired via television into Japanese homes, outraged Japanese opinion. Koizumi publicly condemned the behavior of the Chinese fans involved. This, according to Gries, was a 'striking role reversal' when compared to the strong condemnation meted out by the Chinese Foreign Ministry to the Japanese following the Zhu Hai orgy scandal of September 2003 (Gries, 2005:843-846). The left wing and normally moderate *Asahi Shimbun* ran an editorial in August which poured scorn on the 'ugly and revolting' treatment meted out to Japanese citizens in China during the tournament and the raw hatred on display. The piece even went as far as likening it to the blind mob rule of the Red Guards witnessed in the darkest days of the

Cultural Revolution (Roy, 2005:204). A tendency by some Japanese right-wingers to play up the threat in the ECS and in some cases, speak without any tangible evidence was illustrated on October 17<sup>th</sup> when Nakagawa told a Fuji TV Sunday morning political talk show that Japan had information that China had granted exploration rights to Chinese companies on Japan's side of the median line. He went on to argue that China's 'ignoring the EEZ is an unfriendly move' and warned that 'Japan could be disadvantaged if it refrains from saying what should be said' (Przystup, 2005a:2). In this tense bilateral relationship, both sides made their first attempts on October 25<sup>th</sup> 2004 to negotiate a settlement to their maritime disputes. Viewing Japan's requests as unacceptable and unreasonable, the discussions soon came to naught with the Japanese flatly rejecting the PRC's joint development idea and the Chinese refusing to provide technical data regarding Chunxiao or to cease its operations in the ECS (Pan, 2009:140). A day later, the hawkish Nakagawa declared 'I don't know why these discussions were even held .... I don't plan to get involved in further talks that end without resolution' (Watkins, 2004).

The alarmist claims made by figures such as Nakagawa, though made without hard evidence, were nonetheless plausible in the eyes of some Japanese politicians and their public who, since the 1990s, had become accustomed to what they saw as increasingly threatening behavior by the PRC in areas near Japan. A cogent example of a growing fear within Japanese security circles of a Chinese threat was the publication of an article in the *Tokyo Shimbun* on November 8<sup>th</sup> 2004 where it stated that the Japan Defense Agency (JDA) had recently concluded that there were three possible scenarios where the PRC might attack Japan. These were a conflict over maritime resources, the ownership of the

Pinnacle Islands, and the knock-on effects of a China-Taiwan conflict (*Tokyo Shimbun*, 08/11/2004).

An air of panic also surrounded an incident on November 10<sup>th</sup> 2004 when a submerged Chinese nuclear submarine navigated through the territorial waters of Japan. The incident prompted the JMSDF to go on alert for only the second time since the end of World War Two and resulted in the Japanese pursuing the submarine by sea and air back to Chinese waters. China later stated it had strayed into Japan's waters due to a technical fault (*SinoDefence.com*, 2009). Chinese Vice Foreign Ministry Wu Dawei for example apologetically asserted that the incident was the result of a mistake and professed his hope, somewhat forlornly, that the submarine incident would not hurt the wider relationship (*Channel NewsAsia*, 16/11/2004). China's reassurances did little to soothe Japan's unending anxieties about the possible security implications of its neighbor's rise. The fact that the Japanese Diet voted by large majorities for as many of ten national emergency bills in the period from June 2003 and June 2004 seemed to confirm this. For the first time since the end of the war, Japan also set up 'a comprehensive framework to strengthen Japanese government and JSDF domestic authority to respond to a direct attack upon Japan' (Hughes, 2004:10). As one year yielded to another, the animosity between the two states and the political circumstances in each country did not point to a resolution or stabilization of the ECS frictions taking place any time soon.

## 2005 – Hitting an All-Time Low

In February 2005, the Japanese government finally ceded to the demands of the nationalistic Japan Youth Federation (*Nihon Seinen Sha*) and took control of a lighthouse and its maintenance on the largest of the Pinnacle Islands (*Kaijo Hoan Repoto*, 2007). Fravel suggests that this move was part of Tokyo's process since 2002 of consolidated control over the islands primarily so as to prevent trouble from Japanese nationalists where such actions by Tokyo helped to remove 'the greatest irritant in the dispute.' The moves nonetheless resulted in strong protests from Beijing and Taipei because they 'were viewed as unilateral assertions of sovereignty over contested territory and the consolidation of Japanese control' (Fravel, 2010:152). In the same month, an interim report by Tokyo concluded that the *Chunxiao* and *Duanqiao* geological structures were linked with those on the Japanese side of the median line. This was later confirmed as 'definite' by the Japanese in April (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, 02/04/2005). During discussions with a Chinese negotiator in March, Nakagawa dropped two straws in a glass of orange juice and complained that China was about to 'suck out Japan's resources with a straw' (Brooke, 2005).

On April 13<sup>th</sup>, Tokyo announced that it would accept applications from oil and gas companies to test-drill in areas on the eastern side of the median line. Beijing declared that this development was a serious provocation and reiterated its right to respond (*SinoDefence.com*, 2009). This was in an atmosphere of the worst relations since

normalization in 1972 with mid-April seeing mass anti-Japanese protests taking place throughout the major urban centers of China. The demonstrations were largely fed by Chinese anger over a re-emergent Japan's history textbook controversy and Japan's call for a UNSC seat. The protests also focused on the Yasukuni shrine issue, the East China Sea disputes, and other controversies (Shirk, 2008:140-147). The political and public reaction to the mass demonstrations of April 2005 in Japan was one of shock and disgust at the raw anti-Japanese hatred on display with the authorities being seen to stand by as Japanese property and symbols were damaged and desecrated by baying mobs (Shirk, 2008:141). To add insult to injury, Tokyo was offended when its request for an official apology and compensation for the damage caused to Japanese business was thrown back in their face by Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing (Khan, 2005).

Not surprisingly in the tit-for-tat of bilateral relations, Chinese anger on the street was met by a comparatively more subdued yet worrying rage in Japan with right-wing elements seeking revenge by vandalizing businesses and buildings associated with the Chinese community and making threats (*Asahi Shimbun*, 20/04/2005). Shiraishi states that the Japanese public has a tendency to get quite excited over issues particularly those involving China, and the ECS tensions during their worst periods 'looked like a game' between the Chinese and the Japanese, with the public asking who is winning and who is losing? The Japanese mass media's treatment of this 'game' allowed it to become politicised with the Japanese public understanding a very general and biased view of the disputes. This certainly had a considerable influence on how Japanese politicians

commented on the problem and how it was dealt with in the public realm (Takashi Shiraishi, 22/10/2008).

Negative actions on the Chinese side after 2003 were what Takahara referred to as a 'surge of antagonism' which included the 'anti-Japanese jeering and violence inside and outside the stadiums at the 2004 Asian Cup Soccer games and (later) violent anti-Japanese demonstrations in 2005, which have in turn aroused anti-Chinese and nationalistic sentiments in Japan' (Takahara, 2008:2). The patterns of behaviour and diplomatic gesturing between the two states arguably exhibited the co-relation between negative interactions, domestic political circumstances, and an upgrading of the perceived threat level in each state regarding theatres such as the ECS, particularly in Japan. During the April 2005 protests, Japan's largest daily, the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, stated that anti-Japanese demonstrations had triggered 'anger and bewilderment' in both Japan's ruling and opposition parties, and caused some officials to reschedule visits to China. The *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* also stated that it was 'absurd' for the PRC's Foreign Ministry's spokesperson Qing Gang to state that the blame for the deterioration in Sino-Japanese relations lay at Japan's door (*BBC News*, 16/04/2005).

When the ECS disputes assumed a more serious character after the spring of 2004, the frictions escalated in parallel to numerous other negative interactions and developments. These included tensions over Taiwan following Chen Shui-bian's (a candidate not favoured by Beijing) election in March 2004, highly publicized maritime surveys by Chinese vessels, the new Japanese National Defense Programme Guidelines (NDPG)

expressing increased anxiety about China's intentions, the US-Japan alliance's declaration of common strategic objectives in February 2005, and the PRC's anti-secession law in March 2005 (Bush, 2009:19). These went alongside the aforementioned ongoing strained relations caused by the Yasukuni controversy, Japan's bid for a UNSC seat, anti-Japanese riots and demonstrations in April 2005, and a whole raft of otherwise minor yet emotional incidents that poisoned the atmosphere between the two countries. The salience of the major Yasukuni issue to the politicization of the ECS tensions and the difficulty of either side being seen to concede during their nadir in mid to late 2005 was evidenced in May 2005. During the second round of talks on the ECS for example China's Foreign Ministry's spokesperson Kong Quan commented that 'The talks have become the centre of attention as the Sino-Japanese relations sour because of the Japanese leader's remarks on the visit to Yasukuni' (PRC Embassy/Australia, 27/05/2005).

The impact of all these negative interactions in affecting the interpretation of incidents in the ECS could also be seen in the language used by Nakagawa, when in advance of working level bilateral talks on the ECS, he spoke of Japan's weak negotiating position by comparing it to the PRC's exploring and drilling while talking at the same time which he stated was like 'shaking hands with someone with the right hand and striking with the left' (Przystup, 2005a). Nonetheless, following the heated April 2005 demonstrations, the leadership in both countries began to appreciate that the relationship was headed down a dangerous road and that issues such as the delimitation of the ECS needed to be addressed more seriously in order to avert further problems. Efforts to this end

recommenced during the second round of ECS talks from May 30<sup>th</sup> to May 31<sup>st</sup> but again with little tangible progress made. Relations over the ECS mirrored the wider negative bilateral trend with Tokyo reporting in June that the Chinese had begun constructing a drilling facility just inside the PRC's EEZ and worryingly close (about 4 kilometers) to the median line recognized by Japan (Takahashi, 2004: 1-4).

The once manageable disputes took on a far more ominous character on July 14th when Nakagawa's ministry gave Japanese names to the ECS' oil and gas fields and granted permission to the Japanese oil giant Teikoku (Imperial) Oil to start exploratory drilling (Manicom, 2008a). According to Drifte, the Koizumi government was compelled to react to the PRC explorations by public pressure stemming from mounting concerns that the Chinese were about to extract oil and gas reserves in fields that straddled the median line where 'at a time when nationalist politicians were riding high in Japan, developments seemed to get out of hand by tit-for-tat reactions, such as the Japanese name-giving to the Chinese oil and gas fields, or the licensing of a Japanese company to test drill in the disputed area' (Drifte, 2008b:3). This unprecedented assertive response in the ECS by the Tokyo government was arguably heavily influenced by Diet members and a media demanding action and exerting sustained pressure for a strong response. This decision however significantly turned up the tensions in the ECS and added a military dimension to the exploration activities because either side would now require their armed forces to physically defend their rival claims in areas such as the Chunxiao field.

As one scholar put it, for the Japanese government, the effect of any possible siphoning by China of Japan's resources is arguably 'not so enormous' in an economic or energy sense. Rather, the distrust and ill-feeling in Japan relating to the PRC's actions in the ECS gave strength to individuals such as Nakagawa, who had consistently called for a 'tough attitude towards China', a view which manifested itself in the granting of exploration licenses. This was a very dangerous move since Beijing had previously made it very clear that any unilateral exploration by the Japanese within the continental shelf area would be viewed as a serious provocation that would be met with force (Shigeki Sakamoto, 27/10/2007). Initial official objections to Nakagawa's policy decisions from Beijing included those of Foreign Ministry spokesperson Kong Quan when he said 'We think Japan's practices constitute a provocation to China's rights and norms of international relations' and then warned 'We have lodged a protest to Japan and reserve the right of taking further action' (PRC Embassy/Australia, 27/05/2005). In August, Nakagawa was again warning the Japanese and international media that the PRC was laying down pipelines in the East China Sea and that the Chinese government had repeatedly ignored Japanese protestations over its activities (*BBC News*, 10/08/2005). Another incident in the same month, this time related to the islands dispute, seemed to reflect the level of tensions between the two neighbours. For the first time ever, Tokyo announced that US and Japanese forces would carry out joint exercises in January 2006 aimed at the defense of Japan's outlying islands (Drifte, 2008b:16).

The influence of individual actors in exacerbating these maritime frictions was arguably well illustrated by key players such as Nakagawa. This was exemplified by the

nationalistic minister's 'two straws and one glass' siphoning demonstration. He also stepped harder on this sensitive issue by claiming without any evidence that China was surreptitiously sucking Japan's resources from under the median line, and arguing that the Chinese were threatening Japan's national territory. Such right-wingers in Japan were therefore culpable for their part in politicising a very technical and complicated dispute, and causing it to be viewed by many Japanese as a simple black and white issue, in a country where territorial disputes are in the minds of its people but knowledge of the specifics of the disputes themselves tend to be limited. In this regard Nakai indicates that prior to this politicization by the mass media and some politicians, the East China Sea was not on the radar screen of the Japanese public (Yoshi Nakai, 23/10/2008). A cogent example of this media sensationalization and the pressure placed on leaders could be seen in the right-wing *Sankei Shimbun* when it ran an editorial on September 25<sup>th</sup> 2005 arguing that 'China is trying to turn the ECS into the 'Chinese sea' against the background of its military power. The gas field issue is a matter of Japan's national sovereignty that cannot be measured by profitability alone' (*Reuters*, 01/10/2005). From the Japanese viewpoint, the sense of danger was made worse by the absence of a reliable and tested crisis management system between Japan and China, a fact clearly illustrated in the ECS where China has tended to call on its navy to deal with any problems with Japan (Matsuda, 2008:90).

In September 2005 the tensions in the ECS entered one of their most dangerous phases, and during this time a Chinese navy vessel allegedly pointed its anti-aircraft cannon at a JMSDF's P3-C surveillance plane flying near the *Chunxiao* (*Shirakaba* in Japanese) gas

rig (Curtain, 2005). Chinese actions were matched with more assertive statements from the Chinese side. Huang Xingyuan, chief spokesman for the Chinese embassy in Tokyo, for example, warned in October 2005 that any drilling or survey activities by Japan in the contested field would be regarded ‘as an invasion of Chinese territory’ and ‘a highly provocative act’ (Manicom, 2008a). Huang countered Japanese claims regarding Chinese drilling by asserting, ‘It is of no importance to the Japanese because the area is completely within Chinese waters and we are within our rights to operate there’ and that ‘They know perfectly well the location of Chinese operations’ and they are ‘not within areas claimed by Japan’ (Faiola, 2005).

The PRC’s argument defending their activities near the median line nonetheless fell on deaf ears in an increasingly alarmed Japan. The *Washington Post* ran a story on October 21<sup>st</sup> 2005 stating that the Koizumi government had sent two envoys to Washington ‘to brief Bush administration and State Department on what authorities (in Tokyo) described as a ‘major threat to Japanese sovereignty.’ The determination of some influential Japanese politicians to continue to engage in brinkmanship during this tense stand-off was demonstrated by Katsuei Hirasawa, an energy and oil committee member and parliamentarian in Japan’s lower house, when he entreated ‘We need to take proper measures even at the risk of making the situation more volatile’ and ‘We need to remind China that we are ready and willing to defend our territory and interests’ (Faiola, 2005).

The combination of negative public opinion towards China, speculative yet extensive media coverage, and nationalistic politicians in power in a reform government who

viewed a rising China as a threat all served to put pressure on the Koizumi government to act to defend Japan's interests in the ECS. As noted by Drifte, 'The METI, notably under its very outspoken and right-wing minister Shoichi Nakagawa, tried to present itself as the true defender of Japanese interests in comparison with the MOFA, which had gained a reputation of being 'soft' on China' (Drifte, 2008b:3-4.) This internecine competition to present a tough stance against the Chinese manifested itself in physical terms with Nakagawa's decision to allow Japanese oil companies to apply for exploration licenses in the ECS and to confer Japanese names upon the various gas fields in the overlapping area in July 2005. As a result of this and China's reaction, what was once a political and economic dispute now acquired a potentially dangerous dimension with the military component being added to the mix for the first time.

Needless to say the September incident discussed earlier at the very least convinced both sides of the urgency of stabilizing and properly managing the disputes even though negotiations to this end would not begin to bear fruit until some months later. Both sides also remained stuck in terms of forward movement on lingering issues such as shared geological data, the cessation of production activities, ship movements in sensitive areas and so forth. Some progress was made nonetheless, after Nakagawa's replacement, on the once intractable issue of joint development even though the specifics of where exactly this could take place still remained elusive by early 2006. Persistent ill-feeling towards China in Japan however was evidenced by a public opinion poll carried out by the *Yomiuri Shimbun* and *Gallup* in November 2005 which revealed that 72% of Japanese

people felt that they ‘cannot trust China,’ and 76% ‘feel threatened’ by China (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, 15/12/2005).

### Cooler Heads Prevail

As mentioned previously, a chain of events directly affecting the ECS from July 2005 until September-October 2005 nearly resulted in skirmishes or an outbreak of conflict over exploration activities near the median line. It was noted however that ‘cooler heads’ had helped to draw the two neighbours away from dangerously hostile actions. The appointment of a more China-friendly politician Toshihiro Nikai, in Nakagawa’s stead, in October 2005 for example arguably reflected a desire by Tokyo to repair ties and facilitated a stepping back from the type of brinkmanship witnessed in September. The Chinese for their part maintained the view that any drilling or exploration activities in the ECS by the Japanese were intolerable and found it hard to accept Tokyo’s more assertive posture after so many years of Japanese passivity (Drifte, 2008b:3-4).

Nikai’s visit to Beijing in late February and his decision to terminate applications from Japanese companies to extract oil and gas in the ECS did a great deal to de-escalate the level of friction between the two sides and to re-focus bilateral efforts on negotiations. The spring meeting between Taro Aso and his PRC counterpart Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing on the margins of the Asia economic conference in Doha, Qatar, after lengthy talks and speculation, also pointed to a more constructive approach from both sides. This had been the first foreign minister-level discussion in over a year between the two states

(Jiang, 2007:18). The Chinese also contributed to a less fractious relationship over the ECS amid otherwise negative public bilateral relations over issues such as the ongoing Yasukuni shrine visits by ordering a delay in production activities at *Chunxiao* (*Interfax*, 02/06/2006; *Zaobao*, 23/02/2006). On March 7<sup>th</sup>, for example, Li declared the ‘continued visits by Japanese leaders to the war-related Yasukuni Shrine were the top cause for Japan’s strained political ties with the PRC’ (*Kyodo*, 07/03/2006). In spite of this obvious retreat from the brink of a confrontation in late 2005, hawkish elements in Tokyo remained vigilant about Chinese actions in the ECS. According to a March 2006 article in the *Asahi Shimbun*, Aso, as Foreign Minister since October 2005, insinuated that Japan would adopt a ‘more hard line approach’ involving ‘unspecified countermeasures’ if the Chinese commenced production activities at the *Chunxiao* gas field (*Asahi Shimbun*, 20/03/2006). The nadir of bilateral ties in 2005 nonetheless compelled Tokyo and Beijing to work harder to repair ties even if circumstances were not optimal for compromise.

### **The Path to ‘Principled Consensus’: 2006-2008**

Even with occasional unfortunate remarks and the continued Prime Ministerial visits (until September 2006) to the Yasukuni shrine, the lessons learned in the ECS in the latter half of 2005 served to remind both sides of the potentially volatile nature of the various challenges that the two states had to deal with. The ability in May 2006 of the two sides to make significant progress in the East China Sea by agreeing to put the demarcation issue to the side and attempt to find consensus on joint development (*Sankei Shimbun* 31/05/2006) was perhaps a reflection of this, but also of the improvement in relations

over the ECS since February. Another step forward was the decision in July by Tokyo to resume ODA loan aid to the tune of 74 billion yen (\$650 million) to China. This had been frozen in fiscal year 2005 due to the 2005 impasse over the East China Sea negotiations. Recognizing in the summer of 2006 that the numerous rounds of maritime talks might be long and often inconclusive, the two states also sought to emphasize renewed co-operation in other areas, most notably in the fields of energy efficiency, energy conservation, and environmental protection (Jiang, 2007:18-19;22).

The public face of bilateral ties and the lingering Chinese resentment of Koizumi however were clearly illustrated in July 2006 in the aftermath of seven missile tests by North Korea. On this issue as well, the two sides found it difficult to talk, let alone seriously discuss, possible approaches to the problem. As pointed out by Shirk, while both Hu and Koizumi were happy to consult about such issues with other world leaders, they did not discuss it with each other either by phone or in person, remarkable for the two most powerful states in the region (Shirk, 2008:150). In the East China Sea, the PRC's largest energy company, CNOOC created confusion when it gave notice on its website on August 7<sup>th</sup> that it had commenced full-scale production at the Shirakaba/Chunxiao field (*Kyodo*, 07/08/2006). The Japanese warned that they would take countermeasures possibly involving exploration activities near the median line (*Interfax*, 07/08/2006). Shortly afterwards, the Chinese removed the information from the website and declared that CNOOC still had not started full production at the field. In late August, Tokyo complained loudly when it learned of the PRC's development plans for a new gas field, *Bajiatong*, in an area viewed by the Japanese as part of their EEZ (Manalo,

2006). Beijing responded by accusing Japan of ‘making new trouble’ and defended its *Bajiatong* activities (*Xinhua*, 02/09/2006).

Despite such occasional challenges, events after September 2006 in both states produced a more favorable environment in which to deal with difficult bilateral controversies such as the East China Sea. Beijing’s determined endeavours to re-vitalise bilateral ties after Koizumi’s exit in 2006 for example permitted the now more established Hu to rebuild a relationship with Japan more in line with its rational interests which valued a sturdy relationship as one that served the country’s interests the best. From the Japanese standpoint, the decision by new Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (Sept.2006 – Sept.2007) to make the PRC the state that he would first visit as PM likewise reflected the new Japanese government’s resolve to get relations back on track (Yang, 2007:250;263). His inference that he would not visit the Yasukuni shrine did much to assist Hu in rebuilding ties. Hu’s behind the scenes diplomatic skills in acquiring this non-committal assurance from the new PM over previous months was also regarded as a ‘foreign policy coup.’ Many PRC officials admired the way Hu had helped to clean up a long-standing mess left behind by previous leaders such as Jiang and Koizumi (Shirk, 2008:178).

Evidence also points to the fact that Abe was under considerable domestic pressure from leading Japanese business and media figures to repair Japan’s relationship with its neighbors. Many of them had become weary of the regional alienation caused by the previous PM’s actions (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, 04/06/2005; *Asahi Shimbun*, 05/06/2005). The Japanese public had also begun to look increasingly unfavorably at the shrine visits in the

summer of 2006 after the media revealed that the late Emperor Hirohito himself had sought to avoid visiting the shrine after the souls of war criminals were interned there in accordance with Shinto rituals and beliefs in the late 1970s (*Asahi Shimbun*, 25/07/2006). Like the business community, they had also become concerned about the economic implications of prolonged and deteriorating ties with China. Toward the end of Koizumi's tenure, as many as seven former PMs had contacted him to persuade him to end the visits (Jiang, 2007:20-21).

Beijing's acceptance of Abe's proposal to visit China in the absence of any definite assurance yet not to visit the controversial Yasukuni shrine also highlighted the desire of the Chinese not to allow ideational issues to trouble or dominate relations again and to guide the bilateral relationship back onto the right track (Yang, 2007:250). The improvement in ties was to have a noticeable effect on security concerns in the East China Sea. One, for example, should compare the frequency in which JASDF planes scrambled to counter possible 'incursions' from neighboring states into Japan's territorial airspace. Calculated according to a fiscal year ending on March 31<sup>st</sup>, the number rose dramatically, from 141 in 2005 to 229 in 2006, when ECS frictions were at their worst. According to a Ministry of Defense publication, the 'increase was mainly attributed to more scrambles against Chinese jet fighters.' This number increased marginally to 239 in Fiscal Year 2007 (until March 31<sup>st</sup> 2007) (*Japan Ministry of Defense*, October 2006; *Japan Air Self-Defense Force*, 12/07/2007) but on the positive side, with the exception of these scrambles, 'there was no more activity of a military sort throughout 2006' (Przystup, 2006b).

The '2007 Japan Diplomatic Blue Book', in its evaluation of security issues vis-à-vis China, toned down its threat assessment, a change that resulted from a reduction in tensions after new PM Shinzo Abe's visit to Beijing in October 2006 (Bush, 2009:8). This more positive outcome was a result of the fact that 'cooler heads in both countries saw the looming danger and worked to manage the issue politically', and to the fact that 'when Abe Shinzo replaced Koizumi as prime minister in September, the opportunity emerged to put the relationship on a more positive basis.' Japanese concern about a possible 'fait accompli' in the ECS however, 'was slow to fade' (Przystup, 2006a). A change of leadership in Japan alongside Hu's more consolidated position as Chinese leader provided favorable grounds on which to rebuild relations after the severe chill of 2001 to 2006. This had a positive knock-on effect in terms of how the two states approached the East China Sea problem.

The occasional incident or protest continued to take place regarding the ECS such as in October when nationalists from Hong Kong tried but failed to land on the Pinnacle Islands after interception by the JCG. On November 8<sup>th</sup>, the Japanese protested against PRC production activities at the *Pinghu* field (Yamamura and Sato, 2006). Despite these, top level relations were generally favorable with an emphasis on pragmatic relations and rational interests even though Abe and his foreign minister, Taro Aso, with their hawkish and sometimes anti-China reputations, were not exactly individuals who instilled a lot of trust amongst ordinary and elite level Chinese. Repairing relations however was the goal

of both governments with positive movements further evidenced by Abe's meeting with his Chinese counterpart Hu on the margins of the APEC conference on November 18<sup>th</sup>. When Premier Wen Jiabao became the first PRC leader to pay a visit to Japan in seven years in the following April, the trip spoke volumes in terms of the strides made in the relationship. It also must have been viewed as a foreign policy success by Abe, a leader who was eager to stamp his own domestic and international political legacy, and to that end was willing to show a more moderate yet vigilant line toward the Chinese. This 'double movement' strategy was reflected in his decision to visit the PRC and South Korea shortly after assuming office to symbolize the reparation of ties damaged in the past five years. The success of this strategy for Abe was arguably best illustrated by the 'new starting point' with the Chinese after September 2006 (Jiang, 2007:1;15-16;27).

As with so many other Japanese Prime Ministers however, with the exception of Nakasone and Koizumi, Abe's time in office was to be short-lived. He resigned unexpectedly in September 2007 citing health concerns brought on by the stress of the job (*BBC News*, 12/09/2007). This shift in leadership however was to have a fortuitous impact on bilateral ties because it heralded the beginning of Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda's short-lived yet effective time in office in terms of the ECS disputes. Together with Hu's much stronger position in the PRC, the combination of Fukuda's pro-China familial credentials and his warmer approach meant that the situation was even more favorable for progress on the East China Sea. This window of opportunity came after years in which maritime negotiations were often held hostage to the vagaries of domestic politics and negative popular sentiment. These circumstances on the Japanese side

arguably favored Hu and made it easier for him to restrict groups like the ‘China Federation for Defending the Diaoyu Islands.’ This included placing members of the organization under house arrest in October after an unsuccessful landing attempt (Fravel, 2010:153). The background and resume of the new Japanese leader would also have no doubt helped in convincing the PLAN to acquiesce in the first-ever visit of a PRC warship, the ‘*Shenzhen*’ to Japan in November, a move which also showed that defence exchanges were back on track after nearly a decade (Gurtov, 2008).

Fukuda also visited the PRC a month later in December, a trip which kept the ball rolling for Hu’s first every visit to Japan as China’s top leader in May, the first such visit by a PRC leader since Jiang’s disastrous trip in 1998. In this context of dramatically improved relations over a number of months, Hu and Fukuda were able and willing to formulate an agreement on the East China Sea. The push for a consensus or some form of symbolic progress on the disputes may also have been due to Hu’s desire to secure sturdy ties with the Japanese in advance of the August 2008 Olympics Games when the eyes of the world would be on China. For Fukuda, he must have realised that a foreign policy success might help to raise his low approval ratings (*Japan Times*, 21/06/2008). Taken together, all the right cards were on the table to secure some very symbolic diplomatic coups such as the June 18<sup>th</sup> ‘principled consensus’ on the East China Sea (Zhou, 2008) and the first ever visit of a Japanese naval vessel, the ‘*Sazanami*’, to the PRC on June 24<sup>th</sup> (*Japan Defense Focus*, 2008). These achievements revealed the progress which could be made on issues such as the East China Sea in a relatively short time if the circumstances permitted it.

## **Summary Survey of Perspectives and Opinions in Japan**

This next section provides a brief sample survey of personal perspectives from a broad and varied field of middle elites in Japan. This helps to illustrate how changing perceptions of a rising China in Japan influenced how issues such as the resurgent ECS disputes were interpreted, and who many Japanese blamed for the renewed frictions surrounding these maritime disagreements. It also displays an understanding among some informed Japanese elites of the difficulties posed to the PRC leadership by the behaviour of the Koizumi regime in the 2001 to 2006 period.

**Aki Mori, (doctoral candidate), Doshisha University, Kyoto, on 12/11/2008.**

Aki Mori believes that the climax of the Yasukuni Shrine controversy, amongst others, in 2005, was amongst many Chinese, '*interpreted as a backlash of Imperial Japanese militarism in China*', a development that made it very difficult for Hu's administration to pursue a moderate foreign policy toward Japan. Domestic debates in China about a new approach or a '*new thinking*' policy toward Japan also met a setback as a result. According to Mori, some of Japan's lawmakers do not appreciate this factor in Beijing's decision-making calculations, and do not pay attention to these domestic Chinese political considerations. This has the effect of creating a negative impact on the Chinese people's image of Japan (Aki Mori, 12/11/2008).

**Takashi Shiraishi, Vice President and Professor, National Graduate Institute of Policy Studies (GRIPS) on 22/10/2008.**

Takashi Shiraishi similarly does not take for granted the considerable pressures placed on Chinese decision-makers by elite rivalry and popular sentiment, or the fact that the worsening bilateral relationship made discussing these maritime disputes very difficult, even with mid-ranking Chinese officials. To illustrate this point, Shiraishi recalled a Track Two meeting during the years of the severe chill in relations (2001 to 2006) where the PRC officials present were very conscious in their discussions of the possible reaction to the talks back home in China (Takashi Shiraishi, 22/10/2008).

**Fumio Ota, Vice Admiral (Retired), (Director of the Center for Security and Crisis Management Education, National Defense Academy, Japan and former Director of Defense Intelligence Headquarters at the Japan Defense Agency).**

Some of the most alarmist comments which reflect how numerous incidents since the 1990s have affected Japanese perceptions of China and its rise come from former high-ranking military personnel in Japan. Fumio Ota, a retired Vice Admiral in the JMSDF for example, argued that the PRC's maritime disagreements with Japan could be linked to the oft stated quest for hegemony by the Chinese where *'China wants not only to control Taiwan but also to become the regional hegemon and finally to become a world power beyond Taiwan.'* This, he claims, can be discerned from an apparent encounter involving US Pacific Commander Admiral Keating when he visited the PRC in June 2007 and was told *'with a serious face'* by high ranking Chinese military personnel: *'You (the US) take care of the Eastern Pacific; we (China) will take care of the Western Pacific'* (Ota, 2009:7).

Ota also views Beijing's claims to desire peace and not hegemony as disingenuous and deceptive. Recalling the annual Shangri-La Conference in Singapore on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008, when a PLA deputy chief of general staff claimed that *'China is a peace-loving country and its people are a peace-loving people'*, the retired Japanese Vice Admiral stated that many Japanese nonetheless distrust China because of the *'discrepancies between what she said and what she has actually done.'* In terms of a threat, Ota argues that one should remember that since the founding of the PRC in 1949, it has used force frequently, where *'on average, China has used military power every several years.'* Ota uses an illustration (see appendices) to defend his view that *'in all cases, except in its support of North Vietnam's war against South Vietnam, China has used force pre-emptively (after careful preparation).'* While history is important he contends, it is more important to *'judge a country by its current actions.'* Ota for example draws parallels between PRC behaviour in the South China Sea since the 1990s and that in the East China Sea where worryingly *'the threshold for Chinese use of force is very low.'* Beijing's tactics in maritime areas likewise involve a *'highly developed use of deception in its strategy.'* Ota expands on this

by quoting the most famous Chinese strategist of old, Sun Tzu, who stated over two thousand six hundred years ago that *'War is based on deception.'* Deception, Ota argues, is a core element of Chinese military thinking where a controversial example includes the *'use of disguised maritime militia (fishermen, protesters etc.) as a military resource.'* This tactic, he claims, was utilised in 1974 when China spearheaded the gradual occupation of the Paracel Islands using *'disguised fishing boats.'*

In 1978, this strategy could be again seen when *'over one hundred Chinese armed fishing boats surrounded the Senkaku Islands.'* Hypothetically, Ota ponders the scenario if China should, in present times, invade the *'Senkaku'* Islands, *'she will use those maritime militias as a spearhead'* and if the JMSDF should kill someone in defence by accident or otherwise then *'it should be expected that China will issue propaganda that the JMSDF killed innocent civilians.'* Ota likewise positions the PRC's actions and statements regarding maritime areas by China to *'a pattern in its maritime expansion.'* This pattern is exemplified by the fact that the PRC always appears to fill *'the power vacuum created by a retreating superpower.'* Examples include its advancement upon the Paracel Islands in 1974 when the US was disengaging from Vietnam, in 1987/88 when China approached the west of the Spratly Islands following a reduction in USSR naval ships in Vietnam's Cam Ranh Bay in 1984, and in 1991 when the US withdrawal from Clark Air Force Base and Subic Naval Base in the Philippines eventually saw the PRC move in areas east of the Spratlys to eventually occupy the Philippines-claimed Mischief Reef in 1994. From these precedents, *'it should be expected that China will invade the Senkaku Islands if the US retreats from Okinawa.'* This *'tactical pattern'* of *'maritime territorial encroachment'*, according to Ota, contains within it four stages. In the first stage, the Chinese declare territorial rights in an area. A notable example includes *'the Territorial Water Law of 1992'* which China used it to claim the *'Senkaku'* Islands as her territory, along with Taiwan and areas of the South China Sea, and also the Anti-Secession Law over Taiwan in March 2005 which re-iterated the PRC's right to use force in the event of a Taiwanese declaration of independence. The next phase sees PRC ships conducting *'maritime surveillance in the area where she declared her territorial rights.'* In the third stage, *'China makes its presence known by dispatching naval forces/combatants.'* The *coup de grace* is when *'China makes its final de facto occupation.'* Ota warns that *'China followed this pattern in the South China Sea'* and *'has already advanced to the third step'* in the East China Sea (Ota, 2009: 1-2;12-14).

### **Ikuo Kayahara, Major General (Retired), Professor, Takushoku University**

As with the increasing number of maritime surveys in the ECS, retired JASDF Major General Ikuo Kayahara states that *'China's claims over the Senkaku Islands seem to be of recent origin'*, and that China never made any protests when the US used the islands as a firing range during the US ownership of the islands (along with the Okinawan Islands) from 1945 to 1972. According to Kayahara, it is also an *'undeniable fact'* that the Chinese never once expressed opposition at the time when the islands were eventually *'returned'* to Japan in 1972 as accompanying islands of Okinawa. The *'Senkaku'* Islands were, he claims, similarly nowhere to be found in the text of the PRC's *'Declaration on*

*Territorial Waters*’ which was adopted by the National People’s Congress (NPC) on September 4<sup>th</sup> 1958; a text written years prior to the ‘*Territorial Waters Law*’ of 1992. Kayahara notes how ‘*To Japan’s embarrassment (sic), China abruptly included its claim over the ‘Diaoyu’ Islands in the law of 1992*’ where ‘*these one-sided claims over, and erratic announcements of, territorial rights have helped create distrust and a sense of caution against China among the Japanese populace.*’ These suspicions, he contends, have been reinforced by fears over the PRC’s past behaviour at sea where for example ‘*China advanced to the South China Sea, with eyes set on the Malacca Straits, a potential chokepoint for marine traffic of the Chinese fleets*’, actions that resulted in the occupation of the Paracel Islands in 1974 and then the Spratly Islands in 1988 where the PLAN drove away ‘*the Vietnamese garrison troops by military force, and made the occupation a fait accompli*’ (Kayahara, 2006: 6).

**Akihito Kazumine, Rear Admiral, JMSDF Retired, and Senior Research Fellow, Policy Research Department, Ocean Policy Research Foundation (OPRF), Tokyo on 21/09/2007.**

Akihito Kazumine, a retired JMSDF Rear Admiral based at Tokyo’s Ocean Policy Research Foundation (OPRF) in similar fashion claims that China has two reasons for its actions in the contested East China Sea where one reason is the pursuit of energy resources while the other is the quest for hegemony. For evidence of China’s quest for hegemony in such areas, he claims that one need only look at the pattern of Chinese history where ‘*As in the past, as China became stronger, so greater claims by China*’ became stronger. As a result of these interpretations of a threat, Japan currently recognizes China as one of two threats to its interests in the ECS. These threats include maritime terrorism and Chinese expansionism where China’s hegemonic ambitions in the sea are both short term and long term. The short term ambitions manifest themselves he claims, in the increased demand and push for energy reserves. As China gets stronger however, Kazumine believes that its demands will increase and its hegemonic objectives will become more apparent as was the case at time of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing dynasties (1644-1911) in Chinese history (Akimoto Kazumine, 21/09/2007).

**Hisahiko Okazaki, Director, The Okazaki Institute, Tokyo, on 04/11/2008.**

Hiroshi Okazaki asserts that in the course of its modern history, China did not have an interest in the ECS until the findings of the UNICAFE report were published in the late 1960s. Similarly, he contends that it was not until the passing of the PRC’s 1992 Law of the Territorial Sea that the Chinese ‘*decided that the Senkaku Islands were Chinese territory.*’ Indeed, it was not until the 1980s that China made claims beyond its territorial waters for the first time. According to Okazaki, one need only look at developments in the South China Sea since the late 1980s for evidence of China’s quest for an expansion of power and an extension of its sphere of influence. In the early 1990s, China claimed practically all of the South China Sea as the Chinese sphere of influence. Prior to this, he states, the Chinese did not care to come out to the ocean. For Okazaki, reading intentions

is really a question of guessing. Observers should instead look at the chronology of China's actions in maritime areas for more telling evidence of a gradual expansion of China's interests (Hisahiko Okazaki, 04/11/2008).

**Shigeki Sakamoto, Professor of International Law, Graduate School of Law, Kobe University, on 27/10/2007.**

Noting the unprecedented military dimension to the ECS disputes, Japanese maritime disputes expert, Shigeki Sakamoto, points to the fact that military considerations in the East China Sea are also more important now because China aspires to build a blue-water navy over the next ten years and beyond. The disputed ECS islands are strategically significant in this regard. In negotiations, he contends, China talks about joint-development but tends to focus on joint development around these islands. This focus concerns and worries the Japanese government and its people who prefer to focus on joint-development in the overlapping areas near the median line (Shigeki Sakamoto, 27/10/2007).

**Takahiro Ninomiya, (JMSDF Retired Major General Retired), Acting President, Executive Director, Secretary General, at the Japan Forum For Strategic Studies (JFSS), on 17/12/2008.**

For retired Major General Takahiro Ninomiya, the rise in tensions over the ECS is '*a matter of war over materials and territory where China desires the whole continental shelf and beyond.*' The Chinese, he argues, are strategic tacticians, and Japan needs to be vigilant about '*China sucking out Japan's resources*' where '*The Chinese think that the area is theirs and act like it.*' In an indication of how some influential Japanese (and Chinese) assume a more aggressive stance in the security realm by the other side when an assertive stance is seen in relation to domestic politics and historical grievances, Ninomiya cites the behaviour of China towards Japan, and that of Jiang Zemin towards the Japanese Emperor in 1998 as being '*very arrogant*' where Jiang was viewed as being very anti-Japanese and was also very tough with regards to the ECS (Takahiro Ninomiya, 17/12/2008).

**Toshiyuki Shikata, Professor of Law, Teikyo University, Counselor to the Governor of Tokyo, former Lieutenant General of the JSDF, on 05/11/2007.**

With regards to the issue of intrusions into Japan's EEZ in the ECS for example, it is apparent that such actions create anxiety and unease in Japan and beg the questions: to what extent is China '*sneaking*' into Japan's sovereign area?, and why does China persist in drilling when it knows Japan's stance? Such moves confuse Japan as to China's

attitude, and create the impression that the PRC is *'pushing'* to achieve its economic and political objectives. This has a dangerous effect on the Japanese public where ex-military men such as Toshiyuki Shikata, a former Lieutenant General of the JMSDF and counselor to the Governor of Tokyo, warns China not to *'make a fire in the soul of the Japanese people'* because *'if this happens, then it's very dangerous'* (Toshiyuki Shikata, 05/11/2007).

### Summary

The above sample survey of a number of Japanese middle elites from a wide variety of fields ranging from academics to former diplomats and military officers provides an insight into some prevailing perceptions in Japan with regards to the ECS disputes after 2002. The survey also displays some shared opinions and commonalities about who and what was to blame for the extent of the bilateral frictions over the East China Sea when serious disagreements resurfaced in 2003. To a lesser extent the survey also showed a recognition by informed sources of the challenges created for the Chinese leadership by the unfavorable behavior of the Koizumi government (2001 to 2006). In the context of the August 19<sup>th</sup> 2003 to June 18<sup>th</sup> 2008 period, the survey also reveals how a change in perceptions about China's rise developed and was fed by a collection of negative interactions since the 1990s, China's behaviour in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, its military spending and so forth. When appreciated alongside the discussed domestic political developments in Japan, pressures from within for a more assertive defense posture, and the emergence of the China card in Japanese vote-winning strategies, this survey sheds some light on how the Japanese public perceived these maritime disagreements and how they interpreted the statements and actions of the Chinese in the East China Sea.

## **Chapter Summary**

In August 2003 when these disagreements resurfaced following Beijing's decision to commence production activities in the Chunxiao field, it is apparent that bilateral relations and the overall background were ripe for a hostile and potentially confrontational outcome over the points of issue in the ECS. The years leading up to and including the discussed period (i.e. 2001 to 2008) witnessed the proliferation of, and a more powerful voice for, actors and groups calling for a stronger response on matters like the East China Sea.

The same period was also an unfavourable time in terms of domestic political shifts and circumstances in each country, and in terms of how the two neighbours dealt with each other. These, amongst other issues, included for example a leadership transition, Hu's unconsolidated power, and a divided elite in the PRC. In Japan, influential politicians increasingly pandered to nationalist sentiment and media pressures. At the decision-making and bureaucratic level, there was also a break-away from the more traditional *modus operandi* between Beijing and Tokyo, which had served to quietly deal with sensitive issues in the past. These factors along with the worst popular sentiment towards the other side in the post-normalization era, all contributed to an excessive politicisation of, and less than ideal approach toward, these maritime disputes in the tense 2003 to 2006 period.

The manner in which the outlined actors and groups at the domestic level in each state, who seeing the opportunity to make political capital amid rising public concern and outrage, impinged upon the East China Sea disputes arguably conforms to many of the tenets of actor-centred constructivist liberalism. The depth of feeling in both countries toward their neighbour was arguably displayed in the sample survey of views from interviewees who illustrated how negative popular sentiment was affected by unsavoury developments and gestures since the 1990s. It also arguably reflected the extent to which Chinese and Japanese people were influenced by the way the other side was portrayed in the media in the case of Japan, and both the media and the education system in the case of China. While not providing detailed information on how domestic politics and domestic structures impacted upon how the ECS was addressed, the survey nonetheless provided a more comprehensive grasp of the dual interplay between internal politics and popular sentiment and consequently how they related to the East China Sea disputes in the 2001 to 2008 period. This perspective too makes up an important component of the actor-centred constructivist liberal viewpoint.

The 2001 to 2008 years vis-à-vis the East China Sea problems could be distinguished in particular by two periods i.e. the strained 2003 to 2006 period and then the more constructive 2006 to 2008 period. The latter were years when a key actor in further upsetting already fractious ties, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi assumed the leadership mantle and with his cabinet severely tested the relationship by bowing to pressures from powerful nationalist groups in Japan, visiting the controversial Yasukuni shrine, and pursuing a tougher line with China on a number of sensitive issues including a

more assertive response to Beijing's production activities in the ECS after August 2003. In the PRC, Hu Jintao's still unconsolidated leadership position in the very early years of his tenure, and the public and elite outrage surrounding Japanese actions on matters considered dear to all Chinese, alongside the threat of possible exploitation of these issues by rival elite actors if dealt with badly, meant that the PRC leadership was constrained in terms of how it could publicly and privately address the ECS disagreements after 2002.

By late 2006, the ending of Koizumi's time in office as well as a stronger leadership role for Hu (which he had gradually consolidated over the course of a few years) meant that the relationship, and consequently approaches to the ECS, could be managed in a more favourable manner. The General Secretary's more definite and confirmed position by late 2006 also meant that his rivals were in a weaker state to undermine him. This also helped Hu to guide the relationship in a more positive way, for example via the state media and through tighter controls on nationalist groups who could, as shown in the past, significantly trouble ties with Japan vis-à-vis the East China Sea. This, alongside the advent of a more China-friendly leadership in Japan under Fukuda in particular, and lessons learned following the nadir of 2005, had a favourable influence on the negotiations and atmosphere surrounding these maritime disputes. Such developments were instrumental in permitting the two governments to make great strides in repairing relations after September 2006 and in concluding the 'Principled Consensus' on June 18<sup>th</sup> 2008.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Conclusion: Beyond Principled Consensus**

#### **Summary of Thesis**

The topic of Japan and China's problematic relations over the East China Sea has been discussed over the years by regional experts and others who are concerned with bilateral relations between the two states. These discussions most often were purely empirical and analytical in substance, but were not based on any specified theoretical approach. In addition, within existing discussions the importance of domestic politics and popular sentiment to how the disputes manifest themselves did not seem to warrant as much attention as perhaps they deserve. Theoretical approaches which stress an actor-centred, constructivist liberal viewpoint, however, suggest there is considerable significance to both these factors and as such, they deserved to be examined.

To this end, the deep bilateral tensions surrounding the East China Sea disagreements between Japan and China in the years leading up to and including the period from August 19<sup>th</sup> 2003 to June 18<sup>th</sup> 2008 were considered from an actor-centred constructivist liberal viewpoint. In particular, there was a focus on the problem of why and when small incidents in the East China Sea tended to blow up into a much larger confrontation. This

was all the more pressing a question due to both Japan and China's mutually desire for, and convergent interest in, stable and co-operative relations with each other.

Despite the apparent material and strategic value of the Pinnacle Islands and untapped resources in the East China Sea, both states have tended to successfully manage these disputes while holding firm to their claims and taking measures to check and balance against the activities of the other side. An examination of the ECS disputes exhibited the challenges to this normally peaceful management that domestic politics and negative popular sentiment can have on these disagreements. The research was aimed at tackling this puzzle while also illustrating the ways in which conflicting legal positions often compelled each state to behave in ways which forced a response from the other side and resulted in situations which threatened relations between the two countries.

Four central contributory factors in the resurgence of these maritime disputes since the 1990s were identified. They are: 1) the bilateral security structure, along with its weak conflict prevention system; 2) the increased value of the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) and the greater strategic, material, and geographical importance of the ECS; 3) the complex and conflicting interpretations of the ambiguous UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) which do not point to a permanent resolution; and, important to the aim of this thesis, 4) the influence of domestic politics and popular sentiment on approaches to these disputes. In the PRC, the domestic political interests of the communist regime, popular shared sentiment toward Japan, and rivalries between top-

level elites and constituencies to present themselves as the best defender of the nation played a significant contributory role in how the 2003 to 2008 disputes could be addressed and in how public approaches by Beijing to the ECS problems manifested themselves. In Japan, the emergence of China-related and nationalistic issues as a much more salient electoral card and sensitive issue placed the ECS disputes on a higher and more public political plain and contributed to more assertive public stand by Japanese politicians with regards to these disagreements.

This last factor in particular has served to intensify frictions between the disputants as well as acting as an obstacle to the creation of bilateral regimes and dispute mechanisms for the ECS. While the economic and nationalist pillars of legitimacy, along with elite competition and popular sentiment in the PRC, provide telling insights into approaches to the ECS from 2003 to 2008, popular sentiment, electoral strategizing, and political posturing in Japan also significantly impacted upon the post-2002 East China Sea disputes. Approaching the 2003 to 2008 East China Sea disputes from an actor-centred constructivist liberal perspective provided a useful viewpoint in which to examine how the actual and potential exploitation of popular sentiment over issues such as the ECS by various individuals, constituencies, and groups in both countries constrained approaches to these maritime disagreements. From this perspective, the extent of the post-2002 East China Sea tensions over the islands and the sea's delimitation are appropriately understood by emphasizing their symbolism and the instrumental utility of these issues for domestic politics in both countries.

This problem of popular sentiment and domestic politicking and their influence on the ECS disputes is an ongoing problem that can cause bilateral approaches to the disputes to wax and wane. This is particularly the case in the PRC and goes a long way in explaining the reasons why Chinese reactions to publicized incidents in the ECS can be so dramatic and emotive. These factors are strongly linked to the question of why the maritime frictions were so tense and why no substantial movement in confidence building could be seen in the period from 2003 to 2006. These outlined issues negatively influenced the political atmosphere surrounding the East China Sea disputes, and consequently the progress of the ECS negotiations in the same period. Historical animosity and prejudices and negative popular sentiment are related to domestic politics in each state, and it is apparent that there is a nexus between the two, and thus their inter-linkage rather than the exclusive 'either or' of either top-down or bottom-up perspectives significantly influenced approaches to the 2003 to 2008 ECS disputes and how they manifested themselves.

It is clear that there are legal, strategic, historical, geographical, and political contexts which can shed light on the resurgent East China Sea disputes and the complexities inherent in them. Domestic politics and increased popular animosity toward the other side, particularly since the 1990s, however have added a much more troublesome political element to these disagreements than in previous years, and have significantly complicated their manageability by the two governments. These sub-national domestic

and ideational issues are worth looking at via the lens of actor-centered constructivist liberalism. This approach served to illustrate how and why a variety of actors and the historical, domestic political, and institutional contexts in which they operate could wield such an influence on approaches to the East China Sea.

In order to substantiate its claims, this research set out to achieve the following objectives. Firstly, to argue that, through both the utilisation of over eighty interview notes and other primary sources, when interspersed with effective secondary sources, the domestic political circumstances and context, and popular sentiment in each state played a very significant role in worsening and amplifying the ECS disputes in the 2003 to 2006 period. Secondly, to illustrate how the above two factors can influence the bilateral relationship in such a way as to prevent or effectively freeze positive approaches and substantial movement regarding the ECS disputes. This is despite the fact that both China and Japan appreciate that stable and close economic and political ties are in both their best respective interests. Thirdly the data presented aimed to show that the most suitable approach to these disputes involves a sturdy and consistent bilaterally negotiated *modus operandi* which is not hostage to the fluctuating waves of domestic politics and popular sentiment, and which would serve to prevent conflict and troublesome incidents between the two states.

### Applying an Actor-Centered Constructivist Liberal Approach

The application of actor-centred constructivist liberalism was a new applicable theoretical roadmap through which to examine the inter-relationship between domestic actors, domestic politics, popular sentiment, controversies related to history and identity, and the bilateral approaches to the East China Sea disagreements from 2003 to 2008. The central hallmarks of this theoretical viewpoint include the following: a) that domestic actors and domestic structures have a very considerable influence on a state's identities and interests and thus on a state's foreign policy behaviour; b) a particular emphasis is placed on the over-riding importance of internal actors on external foreign policy outcomes; c) that interests can change and shift depending on the time and policy issue where interests are in the first place shaped by the identities, beliefs and interests of domestic actors; and d) that both the interest and ideational components of internal actors and groups matter and are interlinked. The way that this interlinkage manifests itself can bear heavily on decision-makers and influence policy interests (Panke and Risse, 2007:89-93). The constructivist variant of an actor-centred liberal approach compliments these hallmarks well in the context of a China-Japan related case study in that constructivist liberalism does not over-emphasize the manner of socialization between the two countries (as liberal constructivism might) but argues rather that communication and ideas matter when they intersect with already existent internal values and institutions (Moravcsik, 1997:540). The weight of historical and ideational related controversies when blended in with rational

concerns and objectives in the domestic political field in both states arguably made this theoretical viewpoint a useful approach through which to explore and discuss the factors which can cause these disputes to wax and wane.

The cross-over between the material, rational *and* ideational permitted by actor-centered constructivist liberalism arguably gives it a greater explanatory power in appreciating the diverse domestic interests and actors that states such as Japan and China have and must consider. This is particularly apt when considering an issue as strategically, politically, and historically sensitive as the East China Sea disputes. As such, it allows for a more comprehensive examination of how domestic actors and considerations impact upon these maritime disagreements. Rational interests for example arguably should not be detached from their context or from the issue around which they exist. Actor-centered constructivist liberalism's arguments on how both the rational and ideational are inter-related when placed alongside the ECS problems helps to better illustrate the relationship between issues such as internal actors, domestic politics, energy resources, territory, history, and popular sentiment. Examples of internal or domestic actors discussed via this actor-centered variant included individuals and groups such as governing and opposition political factions, branches of the military, individual decision-makers and politicians, nationalist actors and groups, media outlets, business groups, and the general public. From the 1990s onwards, these actors played a more combined and influential role in the two states and created challenges to the traditional manageability of these disputes by the

Japanese and Chinese leadership. This theoretical framework provided a very useful platform in which to illustrate how these pressures influenced the ECS disagreements in the context of the 2001 to 2008 period.

Keeping in mind the key traits of actor-centered constructivist liberalism as outlined above, this was applied by empirically focusing on inter-related actor, and liberal and constructivist-related themes such as internal actors, domestic politics, historical animosity, popular sentiment, and the inter-relationship between the internal rational and ideational concerns that both states held vis-à-vis the ECS disputes in the lead-up to and during the 2003 to 2008 period. A key factor in understanding the nature of the ECS tensions in the strained 2003 to 2006 period was the influence of these numerous outlined domestic groups and considerations, and how they placed constraints and pressures on their governments to behave toward foreign policy issues according to their preferences, at least in terms of public and official actions. The strength of feeling toward the other side in the two countries, especially since the 1990s, alongside mounting concerns about who was winning and who was losing out in the ECS disputes had also given the issue a great deal more leverage domestically as a potential card in elite political competition in the PRC, as an electoral card in Japan, and as a point of contention that more easily stirred the blood of ordinary Chinese and Japanese citizens.

These domestic pressures tied in with shifts in the traditional diplomatic *modus operandi* between Beijing and Tokyo after the late 1990s. Political restructuring in Japan and

unprecedented societal changes in the PRC which empowered more internal actors, and a dramatic rise in shared negative attitudes towards the other side resulting from domestic campaigns such as educational drives and calls for foreign policy shifts as well as numerous negative interactions, had also contributed to a heightened level of tension and the dramatic politicisation of the East China Sea disputes by the time the shrine visiting Koizumi entered the scene in 2001. Anxieties in Japan had already developed over the PRC's exponential defence spending, and its seemingly aggressive and inconsiderate behaviour in maritime areas including and beyond the ECS, such as the South China Sea. Japan's sensitivity was also fed by its own insecurities regarding its identity and status in the 'lost decade' of the 1990s where China's rise seemed to confirm the inevitable demise of Japan's pre-eminent position as Asia's number one power. In the PRC, nationalistic themes had become increasingly more powerful as a topic in popular and elite debates during the 1990s as anti-Japanese sentiment increased and was indirectly encouraged, and as the realities of the country's post-1979 reform era changes and a new international environment began to dig their teeth into China's political, economic, and social life.

In both countries, political elites had been shown to draw upon these sentiments and speak though not always act in ways that resonated well with the ideas and identities of their home populations. This stemmed arguably from genuine personal convictions but also coincided with the need to fend off possible criticism from political challengers and opponents, or represented an opportunity to bolster their own positions. During the deep freeze in Sino-Japanese relations from 2001 to 2006 and the ongoing shrine visits for example, very negative shared perceptions of Japan made any public and even symbolic

movement on the ECS very risky for the Chinese leadership, due to the constraints of public opinion and the make-up of the political elite at that time. This context also arguably prevented PRC elites from promoting more constructive and flexible strategies during the nadir of the maritime frictions. When viewed through the lens of actor-centred constructivist liberalism, these observations regarding the weight of domestic actors and their context, and the interplay of rational and ideational factors in the 2001 to 2008 East China Sea disputes point to some noteworthy policy suggestions and implications for future approaches to these disagreements. They also point to a number of areas that merit future research.

### **Policy Implications, and Future Research Opportunities**

#### ECS Disputes since June 2008<sup>22</sup>.

It is unfortunate to all too often see the East China Sea disputes remaining hostage to the vagaries of domestic politics and diplomatic failings, to the self-interests of nationalistic actors and groups or to pressure for assertive action stemming from negative elite and popular sentiment. Only through a strengthening of conflict-prevention mechanisms and a maritime code of conduct, as well as other institutional ties that minimise the dangers of

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<sup>22</sup> For a detailed index of ECS-related incidents since June 2008, see the chronology.

a repeat of a late 2005 near conflict scenario or later serious incidents in September 2010<sup>23</sup> for example, can a peaceful management of these disagreements be realised.

The complexities and ambiguities of current maritime laws such as the UNCLOS have also shown however that managing these disputes in a peaceful way while also refraining from weakening one's side territorial claims will be a perennial challenge for the diplomats on both sides even if the bilateral relationship is experiencing a positive spell. It also strongly suggests that the ECS disputes can no longer depend on being constantly put off until another day or on 'gentlemen's agreements' which, as illustrated in September 2010, can be suddenly violated, depending on the make-up and demands of domestic political actors in each state. The 2003 to 2008 period and the ECS' ups and downs in these years displayed how unfavourable domestic political circumstances and popular sentiment can effectively put the brakes on confidence-building and conflict prevention measures. It was also clear that while the disputes are intricately complex, and a permanent resolution remote; significant strides can be made when the political will and opportunity exists to move forward. The ways and means, in terms of maritime guidelines and codes of practice, through which the two governments can consistently and successively deal with these disputes in the future without being intermittently held

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<sup>23</sup> The serious deterioration in ties that followed the September 7<sup>th</sup> 2010 interception of a Chinese fishing boat, *Minjinyu 5179*, and the arrest of its captain in waters near the Pinnacle Islands served as a stark reminder of the lingering vulnerabilities evident in bilateral approaches to East China Sea problems and in the diplomatic failings between the two neighbours. The effects of the now resolved incident are arguably still being felt to this day despite the public improvement in relations since then. For a detailed account of the September 7<sup>th</sup> 2010 incident and its aftermath, see Wada, 2010. For other interesting articles see *npr.org*, 19/10/2010, and *Taipei Times*, 20/10/2010. Also see the chronology.

hostage by domestic politics and popular sentiment is a puzzle which merits attention and deserves further study by researchers. It is apparent that this objective is a most pressing one if Japan and China hope to peacefully manage ECS incidents in the months and years ahead.

In this regard, it is important to set down points to bear in mind when considering future approaches to the ECS problems. High profile incidents such as those that flared up in September 2010 should remind all of the importance of appreciating why the two countries tend to intermittently come to blows over the ECS, and why incidents remain vulnerable to destabilising escalations. It also displays the urgency for Japan and China to address ways to prevent such incidents sooner rather than later. In addition, there are some future considerations that Beijing and Tokyo need to contend with when implementing and formulating policies that deal not just with the ECS but comprehensively with the inter-related wider relationship. Central to such aspirations is the building of strong and positive institutional ties at the wider level which increases the opportunities for a mutually agreed *modus operandi* aimed at conflict prevention in the East China Sea.

## Bilateral Challenges

Incidents such as those witnessed during and after September 2010 would suggest that despite the tangible post-2006 improvement in ties, domestic politics, political uncertainty, and public distrust, continue to impede stronger political and institutional ties, and optimal approaches to the ECS. This is not just a Chinese challenge but can also be seen with regards to Japanese fears and concerns about its rising neighbor. A Genron NPO and *China Daily* bilateral survey carried out back in June and July 2008, for example indicated that some 80 percent of Chinese were optimistic about future ties with Japan but that only 32 percent of Japanese felt likewise. This was in the context of the June 2008 ‘principled consensus’ which seemed to symbolize the progress made in relations since the deep chill of 2001 to 2006. Even during the high point of post-Koizumi rapprochement following the bilateral May summits of 2008, these meetings were viewed by an impressive 79 percent of Chinese as a good improvement in ties while only a much lower 21.5 percent of Japanese agreed (Hongo, 2008).

The lingering post-2006 distrust felt by the two peoples remains one of a number of key obstacles to a necessarily compromising and constructive approach which possibly could reap rewarding dividends for Japan and China. Why this distrust persists in the post-2008 years and how the two governments can sincerely address it in the interests of positive

ties for issues such as the ECS is a key question which deserves to be looked at if comprehensively favourable approaches to these disputes are to be understood.

As illustrated by the events of late last year, it is apparent that even under the current, ostensibly more China-friendly Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) leadership, Japan is still as determined as ever to remain unyielding in the ECS, and to vigilantly observe and track the behaviour of Chinese vessels in and around disputed areas. The numerous near-misses and other incidents in this disputed sea since 2008 suggests that the manner in which JMSDF vessels patrol and pursue Chinese boats, and the Chinese reactions to these remain a constant threat to the stability and manageability of these disagreements.

The historical controversies that troubled ECS approaches from 2001 to 2006 are no longer as decisive now because they have been handled more sensitively since 2006. Japan-China relations have clearly returned to a more respectful level in spite of the September 2010 fiasco, where the sidelining and more sensitive treatment of these controversial issues has improved the chances of more positive bilateral approaches to these maritime disagreements. This does not mean however that the two states are any closer to agreeing on the issues of demarcation or the Pinnacle Islands. The PRC's recurring frictions with states such as Vietnam and the Philippines over maritime territory in the South China Sea have also strengthened the arguments of those in Japan calling for a vigilant and unrelenting position vis-à-vis the East China Sea.

These realities serve to remind people that the immediate focus in the midst of improved relations must be on the stabilisation and management of potential problems rather than an outright and final resolution. The domestic political costs of and lessons learned from the September 2010 humiliation for Japan however worryingly suggests the possibility of any future Japanese administration adopting a hard-line vis-à-vis Beijing yet not stepping back from a crisis like Prime Minister Kan did in the interests of wider relations. One of the lessons of Japanese domestic politics in the last fifteen years has also arguably been one where adopting a tough stance against the Chinese is seen as paying domestic political dividends. This may tempt Japanese politicians to repeat the mistakes of predecessors such as Koizumi for their own political ends (Park, 2010). It is of grave concern to imagine what the outcome would be should such an episode unfold and further supports the need for an agreed and honoured code of practice in maritime areas which can withstand turbulent times and political changes between the two neighbours. The Koizumi years displayed the ways in which politicians and hard-liners can negatively harm bilateral ties on matters like the ECS and spurs the call for a rigid and closely observed *modus vivendi* aimed at peacefully settling maritime incidents regardless of the atmosphere elsewhere in the relationship. How exactly any future ECS accord could stand firm in the face of calls for a tougher line from hard-liners and nationalists in the two states is a difficult question to answer but one certainly worthy of investigation by scholars of China-Japan affairs.

This necessity is all the more urgent when one considers present and future challenges such as the inevitable rise in PLAN activities as it increases its presence in waters leading

out to the Pacific, US-Japanese countermeasures to address these, and difficulties arising from the still unresolved Taiwan issue. These problems serve to emphasize even more the importance of a positive atmosphere and strong leadership vis-à-vis the ECS disputes in order to appropriately deal with them without avoidable frictions that heighten the possibility of misunderstanding or miscalculation (Drifte, 2008a:21-22). As China continues to rise and its military capabilities expand, these above challenges are likely to become more pronounced. These future realities make the call for a realistically attainable resolution on issues such as joint development or ship movements which could possibly see Japan and China peacefully managing the occasional incident without weakening their own legal claims all the more pressing.

As the 2001 to 2006 period illustrated, the conclusion of any confidence-building or conflict-prevention initiatives is very much dependent on a favorable domestic political situation and a favorable atmosphere between the two neighbors. This is a given in terms of the wider relationship which policy makers must consider in their endeavors to find a peaceful bilateral strategy in the disputed sea. While some progress has been made in the past amid less than optimal ties, as seen in the commendable 1997 Fisheries agreement and the less successful 2001 pre-notification ECS accord, it is apparent that the combination of political will, political opportunity, and ideally favorable popular sentiment can make a deal at least more possible even if the outcomes are less than ideal. The possible legal framework for a *modus operandi* in the ECS in which peace is maintained and claims not diminished would make for interesting reading and merits exploration by scholars in the legal and political fields.

### Domestic Political Challenges

As shown by a number of high profile incidents since the ‘principled consensus’ of June 2008, these disputes still remain vulnerable to the policies, prejudices, and domestic political circumstances of each state. In terms of Japan, the worrisome September 2010 incident and the serious fall-out in ties which resulted from it serves as a reminder of the fact that the 2008 consensus and its commitment to joint development is some three years later still threatened by the politics and strategies of frequently changing Japanese politicians and administrations that follow it (Peterson, 2010:442). In the PRC, the turbulence and uncertainties surrounding elite politics and unregulated and informal leadership transitions place understandable doubts on the ability of Chinese leaders to consistently and reliably manage the relationship with Japan and subsequently the East China Sea disputes. The lessons from the Jiang Zemin years are, for one, a stark reminder of a potentially vulnerable Chinese leader exploiting the Japan card to bolster his own position. The ending of Hu Jintao’s time in office as General Secretary in 2012 may also see another leadership transition that might not necessarily be smooth particularly as a new generation of elites seek to assert themselves in Hu’s wake. In Japan, short-term governments and top leaders arguably make it more difficult for Beijing to trust Japanese commitments, and to instead adopt a non-binding wait and see approach in terms of ECS negotiations.

As in the 2003 to 2006 years, this scenario may restrict the ability of a new Chinese leadership to compromise with the Japanese or follow through on agreements made vis-à-vis the East China Sea. Here again the future obstacles to a comprehensive treaty on the ECS are evident with their progress possibly being held hostage to domestic political circumstances. This possible outcome feeds the call for an agreed code of conduct that does not attenuate the legal claims of either side or significantly undermine the leaders who helped to negotiate it and see it through. While consensus on ship movements or defence manoeuvres aimed at preventing incidents might be found, an agreement on joint development carries greater political risk because it invariably requires some form of compromise on sensitive issues which can easily stir the emotions. Note for example the difficulties which a consolidated Hu Jintao had in selling the June 2008 ‘principled consensus’ on the ECS to disgruntled Party officials and selected nationalist groups in an otherwise positive atmosphere of significantly improved relations in the months prior to the Beijing Olympics.

From the Japanese perspective, while having favourable impressions of Xi Jinping, the man earmarked to succeed Hu, there is uncertainty about whether he may be tempted to exploit anti-Japanese sentiment and assume an assertive posture in the ECS should the necessity arise. A slowdown in or threat to China’s economic rise might also make the exploitation of the nationalist element of the CCP’s legitimating strategy more attractive despite its dangers to stability within the PRC. Xi’s position as the lead contender for the top posts in China (expected to become General Secretary in 2012 and President in 2013) was solidified in March 2008 when he became Vice-President of the PRC and then the

vice chairman of the key Central Military Commission (CMC) in October 2010. According to one source, Xi's successful nomination came with the backing of powerful elements within the military and Jiang-aligned and old Shanghai clique allies amid still tense relations with Japan over the September 7<sup>th</sup> ship incident and calls from the PLAN for the leadership to maintain a tough stance. Citing diplomatic sources in Beijing, the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper claimed that Japan is worried due to the bolstering of hard-liners after September 2010 that in the future Xi could find it necessary to be tougher against Japan than his predecessor. The expected 'intense tug-of-war' between Xi and the Hu favored Li Keqiang (who is expected to become Premier) as Hu gradually withdraws from the scene as leader and as Chairman of the CMC, over appointments to key posts, will also no doubt complicate the leadership's flexibility in dealing with the East China Sea (*Asahi Shimbun*, 20/10/2010). In this context, the ongoing bilateral negotiations over their shared sea will arguably be curtailed and restrained due to a fear of being labeled as diplomatically weak during the period of leadership transition (*Japan Times*, 21/10/2010). Any potential exploitation of the ECS and other nationalist related themes for domestic political ends could, as in the past, result in misunderstandings over Chinese intentions in the area and in a harder line from the Japanese in the defense realm.

Only through a consistent faithfulness to a devised bilateral pact on how to deal with ship movements, defense exercises, island landings and so forth can Japan and China hope to peacefully manage these disputes in the future. A key challenge to agreeing to such a *modus operandi* will be the aforementioned problem of not weakening their respective claims. In spite of these challenges, progress however must not merely stop at an agreed

code of conduct in the ECS. If agreements are to be honored and obeyed by both sides, the Chinese and the Japanese must do more in terms of transparency and confidence-building in the wider defense realm so that their respective fears of Chinese expansionism and US-Japanese containment are at least mitigated, and where the behavior of each side in the East China Sea is properly understood and explained.

### Maritime Practice and Legal Ambiguities

The problems caused by the ambiguities of current maritime laws in areas like the East China Sea might also force a more determined debate regarding the available legal approaches open to disputant states and hopefully the creation of more effective and workable regimes and systems to deal with complex disagreements in often resource rich areas (Ramos-Mrosovsky, 2008:907). The ambiguous legalities surrounding such cases inhibit the ability of either case to make any substantive compromises which would go a long way to improving ties over the East China Sea. They also arguably explain one of the reasons why the disputes tend to fluctuate or reach an impasse every few years.

The expansion, and increased activities, of the PLAN as it travels back and forth through the ECS similarly beckons both states to work harder to address near-misses and close calls because these incidents are arguably the greatest immediate threat to stability in the ECS. It is interesting to note however how the Chinese reaction to Japanese protests over

ship movements in what are seen to be Japanese, and international, waters differ to how the Japanese understand such movements. A helicopter incident in the ECS in mid-April 2010 clearly illustrated this dichotomy. The Japanese for example made statements suggesting Chinese recklessness and a lack of central command over behavior by PLAN ships which were not violating any international rules and sailing within acknowledged international waters. The Chinese for their part witnessed the reaction in Japan as an oft-stated example by the PRC of a Japanese unwillingness to treat China as an equal and of Tokyo's attempts to frustrate the 'rightful' movements of PRC vessels in undisputed areas (*CNS News*, 28/04/2010). How the Japanese come to terms with the increased activity of the PLAN in peripheral waters and how the Chinese come to terms with the ongoing US-Japan relationship in these areas, and find some middle ground regarding military activities in the near future is thus a key question which will have a huge bearing for bilateral approaches to the ECS. Proposals by international relations and legal researchers for possible ways in which to deal with this dilemma would help to assist policy-makers in formulating agreements or at least shed some light on the realistic and workable options open to the concerned players.

Consternation about different bilateral interpretations of the legal details of the June 2008 agreement has also created problems between Tokyo and Beijing. Japan for example feels that the Chinese should cease unilateral exploration activities altogether in the overlapping area until a resolution is finalized, and that joint development would mean a more proactive and inclusive role for Japan in fields such as *Chunxiao*. For China however, there is no question that they should not be permitted to operate in an area that

is unquestionably Chinese as they see it, even if one recognizes the controversial median line. Beijing also holds different views on what is meant by joint development in the *Chunxiao* field where their emphasis seems to currently focus more on the issue of co-operative development i.e. Japanese investment only, rather than joint-development alone. This conflict of opinion regarding the ‘principled consensus’ remains to this day one of the key points of contention in their disputed sea with Japan often up in arms whenever it suspects the Chinese of carrying out production activities near the median line area. Japan rejects the Chinese interpretation of the accord and attributes related tensions in the East China Sea to the PRC not observing the agreement in good faith, as they see it, and for not delaying its exploration activities until more comprehensive negotiations have been finalized. The June 2008 ‘principled consensus’ is thus still symbolic rather than substantive. As such, its actual implementation remains uncertain and much depends on the political will and skills of future Japanese and Chinese leaders. Whether or not such legal complexities surrounding the ECS problems can be calmly dealt with regardless of domestic political changes in China and Japan will be a significant test for bilateral approaches to these disputes. It is clear however that a successful management of the East China Sea disputes will serve as a model for the management of disputes elsewhere in the region, and bolster Japan and China’s sought-after reputations as responsible and peaceful leading powers in East Asia and beyond. This may spur Beijing and Tokyo to deal with conflict-prevention negotiations in a more urgent and sincere manner.

## **Closing Thoughts**

Finding a solution that would see a revised median line or a diminution of Japan's claims in the ECS is in the near future extremely unlikely and improbable, even if one accepts the view that both states have often tended to behave in counter-intuitive ways. In terms of the wider relationship, bilateral ties are also still characterized and are likely to continue to be characterized by a blend of co-operation, mostly due to convergent economic interests, and confrontation, mostly due to conflicting security and political interests. The East China Sea in particular remains a thorn in the side of the relationship even though diplomatic relations have improved since September of last year. The adoption of an actor-centered constructivist liberal approach helped to shed light on some of the key actors and issues which can serve to effectively stall any progress in managing or temporarily resolving these disputes, raise the level of tension, and increase the possibility of conflict. Such an approach was a fruitful exercise in that it illustrated how bilateral negotiations related to, and the atmosphere surrounding, the ECS can be at the mercy of domestic political circumstances and negative popular sentiment in each state. Their influence goes a long way in understanding the difficulties experienced by policy makers in managing the disputes since the new millennium. The lessons learned from the worrying lows of 2005 and 2010 in the East China Sea place an onus on the two governments to work hard to improve wider bilateral ties through strengthened institutions and more positive portrayals of the other side. Beijing and Tokyo must also

appreciate at this stage that if they are to avoid a repetition of the close-call of late 2005 and later incidents in 2010 in the East China Sea, the next most pressing necessity in the bilateral relationship is to speed up once-stagnant efforts to deal with crisis management. This situation is thus the most pressing weakness which the improved relationship must seriously address in the near future.

Central to the reasons for this absence of conflict-prevention mechanisms is the profound distrust that still lingers within the relationship, and to a context where tangible defense and security exchanges were largely off the agenda since 1998. A failure to abide by the details of agreements such as the 2001 notification accord has also served as an obstacle to a reliable and accountable system aimed at dealing with thorny ECS issues such as incursions, the scope of exploration activities, and so forth. Now that the relationship has returned to a more cordial and respectful level however, even in the aftermath of September 2010, both sides recognise that a crisis management system is a top of the agenda objective, where without it, the ECS will remain a source of worry and uncertainty for both countries' military forces and decision-makers. The setting up of effective crisis management systems for ECS contingencies is thus of paramount importance in the stabilisation and management of problems or miscalculations between military and coast guard forces in the area. The building of such systems is also a much more realistic and immediate objective than the much-vaunted demarcation solution. Key to conflict prevention in the ECS is thus a code of maritime practice as that would encompass how people and vessels are treated, freedom of navigation and over-flight, resource exploration and exploitation activities, scientific research, marine and aerial

‘spying’ and military activities in disputed areas etc. Such a code would incorporate declarations that abiding by its regulations do not prejudice the rights and claims of any signatory in any way while committing to a peaceful resolution of disagreements (*Japan Times*, 06/10/2010).

The East China Sea challenge is all the more urgent because, as the approach taken by this thesis showed, when unfavourable domestic politics and negative popular sentiment combine, then it makes for a volatile mix that has a troublesome influence over the one issue where China and Japan could conceivably come to physical blows. Simply shelving or putting off the disputes for a future generation in the absence of any conflict-prevention mechanism is no longer practical or realistic. Now is the time for the Chinese and the Japanese to close a door on the past and step up their efforts to turn their words about the East China Sea into actions. As arguably the most obvious barometer for the state of the relationship, a comprehensive and workable understanding and *modus operandi* on the central issues that have caused so much trouble since the 1990s would make a powerful statement about the future direction for the two neighbours and might by its example even spur positive developments for the stabilisation and management of similar maritime disputes elsewhere in the region.

## **Chronology of Key Events in the East China Sea Disputes**

**1895** – China is defeated by Japan in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-95). Under the subsequent *Shimonoseki (Maguan) Treaty*, China cedes Taiwan and *its appending islands* (including the Pinnacle (*Senkaku/Diaoyu*) Islands) to Japan. This is the explanation claimed by China but contested by Japan (*SinoDefence.com*, 2009). Japan has always maintained that the islands were unclaimed ‘*terra nullius*’ (vacant territory) and therefore undisputed.

**1945** – Japan is defeated in World War Two. Under the Cairo and Potsdam Declarations, it is agreed that all territories taken by Japan since 1895 would be returned to China. The Republic of China assumes that this would include the Pinnacle (*Senkaku/Diaoyu*) Islands and did not raise the issue of sovereignty over them immediately after 1945. The islands come under the control of the US as part of their post-war occupation of Okinawa until 1972 (*SinoDefence.com*, 2009).

**1968** – A United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (UNECAFE) sponsored geological survey of the Yellow Sea and the East China Sea concludes that ‘the organic matter deposited by the Yellow River and the Yangtze River may make the continental shelf in this region one of the most prolific oil and gas reserves in the world’ (Kien-hong Yu, 2005: 117; Heflin, 2000:2).

**1970** – Detailed negotiations between Japan and the US concerning the return of the Okinawan Islands to Japan begin.

**May 1970** – The PRC makes its first unofficial claims to the Pinnacle (*Senkaku/Diaoyu*) Islands (Drifte, 2008a:3-4). This followed an earlier claim by Taiwan to the islands. This is in advance of Okinawa’s planned return to Japanese control in 1972.

**1971** – Japan and Taiwan begin joint-exploration talks over energy resources near the Pinnacle (*Senkaku/Diaoyu*) Islands (Drifte, 2008a:3-4).

**December 30th 1971** – The PRC makes its first official claims to the Pinnacle (*Senkaku/Diaoyu*) Islands (Drifte, 2008a:3-4).

**1972** - The Okinawan Islands (including the Pinnacle (*Senkaku/Diaoyu*) Islands) are returned to Japan (Drifte, 2008a:3-4).

**1972** – On the occasion of bilateral negotiations leading to the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations, Tokyo raises the issue of the Pinnacle (*Senkaku/Diaoyu*) Islands. China suggests that both sides shelve the issue and the Japanese seem to acquiesce with this request (Drifte, 2008b:4).

**1974** – Japan and South Korea reach a consensus on the delimitation of the ECS and discuss the exploitation of hydrocarbon resources in the northern area of the ECS. The PRC is not consulted and makes strong protests (Drifte, 2008a:5-6; 20).

**1974** – China’s exploration activities in the ECS start.

**1978** – A Japanese right-wing group land on one of the Pinnacle (*Senkaku/Diaoyu*) Islands (*SinoDefence.com*, 2009).

**1978** – A government-approved protest fleet of 200 fishing vessels from the Chinese mainland enters the waters around the islands (Drifte, 2008b:10).

**1978** - Tokyo again raises the issue of the Pinnacle (*Senkaku/Diaoyu*) Islands and again China suggests that both sides shelve the issue and the Japanese seem to acquiesce with this request (Drifte, 2008b:4).

**1978** – Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping asks that Japan and China agree to disagree by shelving the islands dispute for a future generation to deal with, and to focus on strengthening wider bilateral relations (Lo, 1989).

**1979** – Japan's starts to construct a helicopter landing pad on the largest of the Pinnacle Islands. The PRC protests by dispatching fifty fishing vessels to the waters around the disputed islands (Blanchard, 2006: 216).

**1980** – In late 1980, the two governments make efforts to agree on a maritime border in the ECS. China insists on the natural prolongation principle while Japan pushes for a median line solution. The two sides fail to reach an agreement. The PRC drills two exploratory wells (*Longjing I* and *Longjing II*) well within its side of the unrecognised Japanese median line. Japan expresses its concern with the move and the Chinese respond by removing the rigs and calling for joint development talks with Japan (Blanchard, 2006: 217).

**1980 – 1986** – Following ratification of earlier ECS agreements, Japan and South Korea carry out seven explorations in three sites but finally abandoned these when it became clear that these fields were not economically viable (Drifte, 2008a:5-6).

**December 1982** – UNCLOS is signed and sets out new updated guidelines for demarcating EEZs between states.

**1988** – On the tenth anniversary of the construction of 'Number One Lighthouse' on one of the Pinnacle Islands, the Japanese nationalist group '*Nihon Seinensha*' spends three million yen replacing the original structure with an aluminium one (Blanchard, 2006: 217).

**September 1990** – Reports surface in the Japanese media that the government is preparing to recognise the controversial lighthouse as an ‘official navigation mark.’ The PRC and Taiwan protest the development (Pan, 2009:138).

**1992** – *Chunxiao* is a number of offshore areas in the ECS that China seeks to develop by inviting the co-operation of foreign investors (Zha, 2008).

**February 1992** – Beijing passes the ‘Law of the PRC on the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone’ laying claim to islands and territory in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, and reserving the right to exercise its sovereignty in these areas. Tokyo protests. The 1992 law is viewed in Japan as a worrying move away from earlier Chinese arguments that the Pinnacle Islands’ disputes should be shelved (Wu Xinbo (2000)).

**March 1992** – Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) declares that ‘it is not possible to “shelve” the problem’ and states that there is no evidence that Japan ever agreed to such a policy (*Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)*, 05/03/1992; 18/03/1992).

**April 1992** – Jiang Zemin visits Japan. Japanese PM Kiichi Miyazawa seeks clarification about the 1992 Law, and Jiang refers to Deng’s 1978 ‘shelving’ statement as an indication of China’s position (Drifte, 2008b:33).

**May 1995** – A PRC vessels conducts survey activities near the Pinnacle Islands but eventually leaves after official Japanese protests (Blanchard, 2006: 218).

**August 1995** – JASDF planes are scrambled to ward off PRC planes suspected of carrying out a patrol mission over the Pinnacle Islands (Blanchard, 2006: 218).

**December 1995** – Japan reports that a Chinese drilling vessel is anchored close to the islands (Blanchard, 2006: 218).

**February 1996** – Japan reports that one of its Japanese Maritime Safety Agency (JMSA) ships had spotted a Chinese drilling vessel near the islands (Blanchard, 2006: 218). The delineation of the East China Sea becomes a much more divisive issue in the same month when almost simultaneously Japan and South Korea declare their claimed Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) (Valencia, 2007: 148). China also ratifies UNCLOS in 1996.

**1996** - UNCLOS is ratified. States involved in maritime disputes are asked to refrain from activities that could cause trouble on the path to a final agreement (Drifte, 2009: 61). Tokyo declares its EEZ in June 1996 and outlines a median line in the ECS based on what it views as an ‘equitable’ solution as discussed in Article 74(1) of UNCLOS (Liao, 2008: 61).

**July 14<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> 1996** – Seven members of the nationalistic Japan Youth Federation (*Nihon Seinen Sha*) land on the Pinnacle (*Senkaku/Diaoyu*) Islands to construct a makeshift lighthouse and petition the government to recognize it as an official beacon. The incident infuriates nationalists in China, and draws protests from Beijing and Taipei (Downs and Saunders, 1998-1999:133; *Reuters*, 06/02/2007). At a subsequent press conference, Tokyo expressed concerns over the lighthouse but did not remove it. It also declared that ‘Japan clearly holds the ownership of the Senkaku Islands’ and that the construction of the lighthouse was legitimate (Blanchard, 2006: 218-19). The PRC angrily protests and asserts that the ‘erecting a lighthouse on the island is a serious encroachment upon China’s territorial sovereignty’ and demands that Tokyo deals appropriately with the incident (*People’s Daily*, 30/08/1996).

**July 29<sup>th</sup> 1996** – Bilateral tensions increase after Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto becomes the first Japanese leader to visit the controversial Yasukuni shrine in over ten years (Downs and Saunders, 1998-1999: 133).

**August 18<sup>th</sup> 1996** – A small Japanese nationalist group, the ‘Small Islands Defense Association’ plants a wooden Japanese flag beside one of the controversial lighthouses (Downs and Saunders, 1998-1999: 133).

**August 1996** – The *People's Daily* runs an article declaring that ‘No Chinese will surrender the country’s territory and sovereignty to anyone. If anybody dares to do so, he will be cursed for centuries.’ Beijing also allowed a Chinese nationalist group to present a petition to Jiang Zemin calling on the government to use the navy to dismantle the lighthouse (Blanchard, 2006: 218-19).

**September 26<sup>th</sup> 1996** - A Hong Kong protester, David Chan, drowns after jumping overboard from his protest ship in a bid to avoid arrest by the Japanese Coast Guard (JCG) who had been sent to intercept the group before their attempted landing on one of the disputed islands (*Reuters*, 06/02/2007).

**May 5<sup>th</sup> 1997** – Japanese politician Shingo Nishimura stages a nationalistic religious ceremony on the islands. Beijing protests against the incident (*Reuters*, 06/02/2007).

**Late May 1997** - A protest flotilla from Taiwan including over two hundred activists and heading towards the islands is held off by the Japanese Coast Guard (*Reuters*, 06/02/2007).

**November 1997** – China and Japan finalize a fishing agreement by establishing ‘joint fishing areas’ and sidelining the EEZ and sovereignty issues for the purposes of an agreement in this regard (Drifte 2008b:13).

**April 1998** – A PRC marine research vessels twice enters the territorial waters of the Pinnacle Islands while surveying the ocean floor within Japan’s EEZ.

**June 1998** – The PRC commences energy exploitation activities at the *Pinghu* oil field. In the same month, five boats with up to sixty protesters from Taiwan and Hong Kong come into confrontation with JCG boats as they attempt to land on the disputed islands (Valencia and Amae, 2003:200).

**1998** – China officially outlines its EEZ claims in the ECS according to the principle of ‘natural prolongation of the continental shelf’ as stated in Article 76 of UNCLOS (Liao, 2008:61).

**September 1998** – A Chinese protesters’ boat is sunk after a collision with the Japanese Coast Guard (*SinoDefence.com*, 2009).

**November 1998** – PRC leader Jiang Zemin visits Japan on a trip later regarded as a diplomatic failure due to the Chinese President’s disrespectful behavior, and his insistence on a formal apology for Japan’s wartime record in China (Seig, 2008).

**1999** – China’s development of the *Pinghu* field receives support from Japan in the form of a \$250 million loan from the Japan-chaired Asian Development Bank (ADB) (Zha, 2008). This financial assistance also passed through the ADB’s Export/Import Bank (renamed the Japan Bank of International Co-operation (JBIC) in 1999). The first pay-out occurred in February 1997 and the final one occurred in November 2001 (Drifte, 2008b:17).

**2000** – A fifth test in the *Chunxiao* area produces yields significant enough for commercial exploration (Zha, 2008).

**April 2000** – Members of the Japanese nationalist group ‘*Nihon Seisensha*’ land on one of the Pinnacle Islands and build a small shrine (Blanchard, 2006: 219).

**February 2001** – Both states agree to a two month prior notification agreement to deal with vessels entering disputed waters (Takahashi, 2004: 1-4).

**April 26<sup>th</sup> 2001** – Junichiro Koizumi becomes Prime Minister of Japan (2001-2006). The Koizumi government’s handling of sensitive historical issues such as the Yasukuni shrine, history textbooks, and Taiwan, along with general approaches toward China was to have a very negative effect on Chinese attitudes and approaches toward Japan until 2006.

**July 2001** - a Beijing-sponsored Norwegian seismic survey ship, the ‘Nordic Explorer’ showed up within Japan’s maritime territory and stayed for two months. Tokyo’s reply was to allege that China had unlawfully intruded into Japan’s EEZ. Beijing countered by claiming that the sea’s boundaries still remained unsettled.

**December 2001** - A Japanese coast guard ship chases after and sinks a suspected North Korean spy ship close to China’s coast and inside China’s EEZ, using deadly force for the first time since the Second World War. Beijing responds to this by reprimanding Japan for the incident, and denouncing it as a violation of China’s sovereignty (Wei Su, 2005: 45-46).

**April 2002** – Tokyo takes ownership of the lease of the remaining three Pinnacle Islands that had hitherto been under private ownership. This action thus put all the islands under the direct control of the Japanese government (Fravel, 2010:152).

**June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2003** – Protesters from China and Hong Kong unsuccessfully attempt to land on the Pinnacle Islands (*SinoDefence.com*, 2009).

**August 19<sup>th</sup> 2003** – The current oil and gas field dimension of the ECS disputes begins in earnest. Major oil and gas companies Royal-Dutch Shell and Unocal agree to join two Chinese companies in developing the *Chunxiao* field (near the median line) and other fields in the ECS (Zha, 2008).

**November 2003** – A surfaced Ming-class submarine with its flag hoisted sails through the Osumi Strait between Kyushu and Tanegashima in southern Japan (*SinoDefence.com*, 2009).

**2003** – 2003 marks the last year in which Japanese nationalists successfully landed on the Pinnacle Islands (Fravel, 2010:152-53).

**January 15<sup>th</sup> 2004** – JMSDF patrol boats allegedly ram two Chinese fishing boats near the ECS islands (*SinoDefence.com*, 2009).

**March 2004** – Seven Chinese activists land on the largest of the Pinnacle Islands (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, 05/10/2004).

**April 2004** – In response to events in the previous month, Tokyo decides to position two Japan Coast Guard (JCG) vessels near the disputed islands so as to block attempts by activists seeking to land on them (Fravel, 2010:152).

**April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2004** – A bus belonging to a Japanese nationalist group rams into the Chinese consulate in Osaka, Japan in a protest against China's claims in the ECS (*SinoDefence.com*, 2009).

**May 2004** – A Japanese nationalist scholar, Shigeo Hiramatsu, flies over the *Chunxiao* gas field and writes a well-publicized article on the construction of a natural gas extraction rig in the area (*Tokyo Shimbun*, 28/05/2004).

**June 29<sup>th</sup> 2004** – METI Minister Shoichi Nakagawa tells reporters that Japan will survey undersea resources in the East China Sea (Przystup, 2004:9).

**June 30<sup>th</sup> 2004** – Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs Chen Guofeng summons the Japanese ambassador to the PRC to protest Japanese undersea survey plans (Przystup, 2004:9).

**July 6<sup>th</sup> 2004** – Japanese aircraft spot a Chinese maritime research ship, operating without prior notification in Japan's EEZ. The Japanese Embassy in Beijing asks for an explanation (Przystup, 2004:9).

**July 7<sup>th</sup> 2004** – Japanese survey activities begin in Japan's EEZ (Przystup, 2004:9).

**July 19<sup>th</sup> 2004** – PRC authorities in Fujian in southern China prevent ten people from setting out to land on the Pinnacle Islands (*SinoDefence.com*, 2009). The ten were members of the 'China Federation for Defending the Diaoyu Islands' and were prevented from sailing on the grounds that they were using Chinese fishing vessels for non-commercial purposes (Fravel, 2010:153).

**Oct. 17<sup>th</sup> 2004** – METI Minister Shoichi Nakagawa tells a Fuji TV Sunday morning political talk show that Japan has information that China has granted exploration rights to Chinese companies on Japan's side of the median line (Przystup, 2005a:2).

**October 19<sup>th</sup> 2004** – The first round of a series of bilateral negotiations over the ECS begin after Beijing announces that it will engage in bilateral discussions to discuss conflicting claims over exploration activities in the ECS (*SinoDefence.com*, 2009).

**October 2004** - Royal-Dutch Shell and Unocal pull out of an agreed ECS project with China, citing a lower than expected value assessment of the project. It is believed that Japanese protests over the exploration activities might also have contributed to the decision to withdraw (Zha, 2008).

**November 10<sup>th</sup> 2004** – A submerged Chinese nuclear submarine navigates in the territorial waters of Japan. The incident prompted the JMSDF to go on alert for only the second time since the end of WWII and pursue the submarine by sea and air back to Chinese waters. China later stated it had strayed into Japan's waters due to a technical fault (*SinoDefence.com*, 2009).

**February 2005** – the Japanese government finally cedes to the demands of the nationalistic Japan Youth Federation (*Nihon Seinen Sha*) and takes control of the *Uotsuri* lighthouse and its maintenance on one of the Pinnacle Islands (*Kaijo Hoan Repoto*, 2007).

**February 2005** – An interim report by Tokyo concludes that the *Chunxiao* and *Duanqiao* geological structures are linked with those on the Japanese side of the median line. This was confirmed as 'definite' by the Japanese in April 2005 (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, 02/04/2005).

**March 2005** - During discussions with a Chinese negotiator, METI Minister Shoichi Nakagawa dropped two straws in a glass of orange juice and complained that China was about to 'suck out Japan's resources with a straw' (Brooke, 2005).

**Mid-April 2005** – Mass anti-Japanese protests take place throughout the major urban centers of China. The demonstrations are largely fed by Chinese anger over Japan's history textbook controversy and Japan's call for a UNSC seat. The protests also focus on the Yasukuni shrine issue, the East China Sea disputes, and other controversies.

**April 13<sup>th</sup> 2005** – Tokyo announces that it will accept applications from oil and gas companies to test-drill in areas on the eastern side of the median line. Beijing views the act as a sincere provocation and declares its right to react (*SinoDefence.com*, 2009).

**May 30<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> 2005** – The second important round of discussions on the East China Sea are held in Beijing.

**June 2005** - Tokyo reports that the Chinese have begun constructing a drilling facility just inside the PRC's EEZ and worryingly close (about 4 kilometers) to the median line recognized by Japan (Takahashi, 2004: 1-4).

**July 2005** - Japanese oil giant Teikoku (Imperial) Oil is granted permission to start exploratory drilling in the East China Sea.

**July 2005** – Tokyo gives Japanese names to Chinese oil and gas fields in the ECS. (*Chunxiao* = *Shirakaba*, *Longqing* = *Asunaro*, *Duanqiao* = *Kusunoki*, *Tianwaijian* = *Kashi*, *Lengquan* = *Kikyo*) (Drifte, 2008a:13)

**July 2005** - Ishigaki island assembly members in Okinawa prefecture submit a motion calling on the mayor and assembly members to inspect the islands. Beijing protests and angrily declares through one of its mouthpieces, the *People's Daily*, that Japan 'not only connives at the right-wing groups' provocative activities, but also goes back on its promise of not taking unilateral actions and tries in vain to capture the Diaoyu Islands as so-called 'Japanese territory' by *inter alia* starting to rent the islands in 2002 and passing resolutions" (*People's Daily Online*, 21/06/2005).

**July 2005** – Beijing warns that it would consider test drilling by Japan in the ECS as serious and as a threat to its sovereignty, confirming its view that the PRC's EEZ extends to the Okinawa Trough (*Financial Times*, 14/07/2005).

**July 2005** – Chinese authorities raid the offices of the 'China Federation for Defending the Diaoyu Islands' in response to the organization's activities during the mass anti-Japan demonstrations in April 2005 (Fravel, 2010:153).

**August 2005** – Tokyo announces that US and Japanese forces will carry out joint exercises in January 2006 for the defence of Japan's outlying islands. This is the first time ever for such a joint exercise (Drifte, 2008b:16).

**September 2005** – When a Japanese expedition approaches the *Chunxiao* field area, the Chinese counter them with a fleet of five PLAN vessels, including the advanced *Sovremenny* guided missile destroyer (Manicom, 2008a). The ships were observed by a Japanese patrol plane near the *Chunxiao* gas field. This is the first time that PLAN warships are present in that area of the ECS (Onishi and French, 2005). A Chinese navy vessel allegedly points its anti-aircraft cannon at a JMSDF's P3-C surveillance plane flying near the *Chunxiao* gas rig (Curtain, 2005).

**September 2005** - A day before negotiations on the ECS are scheduled to resume, Beijing confirms that it has set up a 'reserve vessel squadron' in the East China Sea (*AFP*, 29/09/2005). They also declare that the squadron is capable of 'fighting during wars' and was equipped to 'eliminate obstacles at sea' (Valencia, 2006:22-27).

**October 2005** – Nationalistic METI Minister Shoichi Nakagawa is replaced by a more China friendly politician, Toshihiro Nikai. (Drifte, 2008b: 3)

**February 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> 2006** – ECS frictions between the two states persist until early 2006, when Japan's new METI Minister, Toshihiro Nikai, pays a visit to Beijing. After becoming METI Minister, Nikai puts an end to applications by Japanese oil companies to explore in the ECS, and chooses to solve the dispute through negotiation (*Asahi Shimbun*, 23/02/2006; *Zaobao*, 25/02/2006). Beijing reciprocates by ordering a delay in production activities at the *Chunxiao* gas field (*Interfax*, 02/06/2006; *Zaobao*, 23/02/2006).

**March 7<sup>th</sup> 2006** – Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing claims that the 'continued visits by Japanese leaders to the war-related Yasukuni Shrine were the top cause for Japan's strained political ties with the PRC' (*Kyodo*, 07/03/2006).

**May 2006** – Tokyo and Beijing make a significant step forward by agreeing to shelve the demarcation issue because it would take too long to resolve, and opt to focus on joint-development instead (*Sankei Shimbun* 31/05/2006).

**September 25<sup>th</sup> 2006** – President Hu Jintao's tighter grip on power vis-à-vis the rival Shanghai faction steps up a gear after he disposes the former Shanghai party secretary Chen Liangyu (Lam, 2008).

**Oct. 8<sup>th</sup> 2006** – Japan's new Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (since Sept. 26<sup>th</sup>) visits Beijing, meets President Hu Jintao, and declares that he would handle the Yasukuni Shrine issue 'appropriately' (*Japan Times*, 09/10/2006).

**Oct.27<sup>th</sup> 2006** – A group of Hong Kong activists attempt to land on the Pinnacle Islands but are blocked by the Japanese Coast Guard (JCG) (*International Herald Tribune*, 26/10/2006).

**November 2006** – The PLAN carry out a naval exercise in the East China Sea (*Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, 05/11/2006).

**Nov. 18<sup>th</sup> 2006** – Hu and Abe meet on the sidelines of an APEC conference in Hanoi, Vietnam.

**December 2006** – More than one hundred ships from the US and Japanese navies take part in a joint exercise aimed at preparing for various contingencies in the event of a possible naval conflict with the PRC over the Pinnacle Islands (*Japan Times*, 30/12/2006).

**April 2007** – PRC Premier Wen Jiabao visits Japan. It is the first visit by a Chinese leader to Japan in almost seven years.

**October 2007** – Four members of the ‘China Federation for Defending the Diaoyu Islands’ who had unsuccessfully attempted to land on the Pinnacle Islands are placed under house arrest by Chinese authorities after they return to China (Fravel, 2010:153).

**November 2007** – The Chinese warship ‘*Shenzen*’ makes a goodwill visit to Japan. The goodwill visit was the first by a Chinese naval vessel in the post-war era and also served to show how defense exchanges were back on the bilateral agenda after a hiatus of nearly ten years.

**December 2007** – Japan’s new Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda visits China.

**May 2008** – Hu Jintao visits Japan.

**June 18<sup>th</sup> 2008** – China and Japan agree to a ‘principled consensus’ that would see the joint and co-operative development of part of the natural gas fields in the East China Sea (Zhou, 2008).

**June 24<sup>th</sup> 2008** – The Japanese destroyer ‘*Sazanami*’ becomes the first Japanese naval vessel to visit China in six decades.

**December 8<sup>th</sup> 2008** – Two PRC surveillance ships are spotted by a Japanese Coast Guard (JCG) patrol about 6km south-east of the Pinnacle Islands. The vessels remained in the area for up to nine hours. In response to Japanese protests, a spokesperson for the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed that China had the right to patrol the waters of the islands since ‘the islands have always been a part of China’s territory’ (*SinoDefence.com*, 2009).

**January 17<sup>th</sup> 2010** – Japan warns China that it would take ‘certain action’ such as starting its own developments in the disputed area if Beijing starts unilateral gas production in the *Chunxiao* field area (*Reuters*, 17/01/2010).

**April 10<sup>th</sup> 2010** – JMSDF spot a surfaced flotilla of two Chinese submarines and eight destroyers sailing in international waters toward the Pacific (later seen near the disputed *Okinotorishima* area) in an area about 140 kms south of the Okinawan islands in the East China Sea. A few days later, Japan’s Defense Minister, Toshimi Kitazawa, states ‘We will investigate whether (China) has any intention against our nation’ (*Japan Times*, 14/04/2010). The Japanese however accepted that the Chinese were not acting against any international laws.

**April 21st 2010** – In a separate incident, in an area 500km south of Okinawa, a Chinese carrier-borne helicopter takes photos of, and comes within 90 meters of, a Japanese destroyer on alert in the area to track PRC vessels (*Japan Today*, 22/04/2010). A similar incident occurred a few weeks earlier.

**April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2010** – The PRC’s Ministry of National Defense spokesperson Huang Xueping responds to Japanese complaints by arguing that China did not violate any international laws and as with other states’ navies, the PLAN was engaged in ‘normal routine’ practice on the high seas and that ‘countries concerned should not track down or disrupt the activities of Chinese military vessels engaged in normal defense exercises’(Cheng, 2010). This frustration by China was likewise illustrated by the PRC’s ambassador to Japan, Cheng Younghua, when he said ‘How would the Japanese people feel if there was a Japanese drill and the Japanese left port and was then annoyingly chased by Chinese destroyers?’ and where such behaviour by Japan ‘breaches the spirit of mutual understanding and mutual trust’ (Goodenough, 2010).

**April 27<sup>th</sup> 2010** – Concerns are expressed in China about an apparent proposed Japanese plan to unilaterally explore the seabed around the Pinnacle Islands for rare metals. A researcher at CIIS, Jin Linbo, argues that ‘Tokyo should communicate with Beijing before taking any unilateral action’ because such actions could be ‘misinterpreted’ by the Chinese (*China Economic Net*, 27/04/2010).

**May 6<sup>th</sup> 2010** – Tokyo complains that the PRC violated its sovereign rights in the ECS after a PLAN ship approaches and disturbs a Japanese survey vessel carrying out surveys in a ‘Japanese’ EEZ area on the Japanese side of the median line. Beijing responds that the ‘law-enforcement activities’ were ‘totally legitimate’ (*Reuters*, 06/05/2010).

**May 11<sup>th</sup> 2010** – The PRC’s ambassador to Japan, Cheng Yonghua, defends China’s recent actions in the ECS and responds to questions about the April ‘helicopter’ incidents by stating the PLAN reacted to the fact that the JMSDF was in close proximity and was ‘following around the Chinese navy’ while it was on a legitimate training mission (Ito, 2010a).

**May 13<sup>th</sup> 2010** – The *Japan Times* reports that Beijing has been calling on the Japanese to ‘supervise’ its domestic media’s coverage of the exploration aspects of the ECS disputes so as to prevent inaccurate reporting which damages bilateral approaches to the disagreements. They cite in particular the difference in meaning between ‘joint development’ and ‘co-operative development’ in the *Chunxiao* field as stipulated in the June 2008 ‘principled consensus’ (*Japan Times*, 13/05/2010).

**May 15<sup>th</sup> 2010** - Beijing and Tokyo agree ‘on the need to step up efforts toward establishing a hot-line mechanism involving both countries’ defense authorities to avoid problems in disputed areas, following friction over China’s recent activities in waters off Japan’ (*Japan Today*, 16/05/2010).

**May 31<sup>st</sup> 2010** - Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao agree to begin bilateral negotiations on implementing the June 2008 treaty over gas fields in the East China Sea during Wen’s visit to Japan (May 29<sup>th</sup> – June 1<sup>st</sup>). Wen

was particularly interested in setting up ‘a crisis-management mechanism to prevent incidents that could trigger bilateral friction, including accidental contact involving military ships’ (Ito, 2010b).

**June 2nd 2010** – After months of low opinion poll ratings, and having failed to honor an election promise to relocate the Futenma US air force base in Okinawa, Yukio Hatoyama, Japan’s Prime Minister since September 2009, resigns (Hongo, 2010).

**September 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> 2010** – A Chinese fishing boat ‘*Minjinyu 5179*’ rams into JCG vessels sent to monitor it after the ship’s captain refused to obey orders to leave waters surrounding the Pinnacle Islands. The ship and its crew are later detained and papers are drawn up to charge them with offences against domestic Japanese law such as interfering with JCG officials conducting their duties (Wada, 2010).

**September 13<sup>th</sup> 2010** – The fourteen remaining crew members of the Chinese fishing boat are permitted to return to China after questioning by the Japanese Coast Guard. The captain, Zhan Qixiong, is however kept in detention in preparation for charges to be drawn against him (*Japan Today*, 26/09/2010).

**September 14<sup>th</sup> 2010** – A tightly contested and distracting leadership election takes place within the ruling Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). Naoto Kan survives as leader while the nationalistic China hawk Seiji Maehara is named as the new Foreign Minister (Wada, 2010).

**September 17<sup>th</sup> 2010** – The new Japanese cabinet convenes for the first time since the incident. Japanese Minister of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (at the time of the incident) and Foreign Minister (after the leadership election) Seiji Maehara, states that it is appropriate for the Chinese captain’s case to be dealt with under the Japanese legal system because the Pinnacle Islands are an ‘integral part of Japanese territory’ and that ‘territorial issues do not exist in this region’ (*New York Times*, 20/09/2010).

**September 18<sup>th</sup> 2010** – Chinese authorities take pro-active steps to manage and control growing anti-Japanese protests within the PRC (*Asahi Shimbun*, 20/10/2010).

**September 19<sup>th</sup> 2010** – Ishigaki Summary Court in Japan’s southern Okinawa prefecture announces that the detention of Zhan would be extended by another ten days until September 29th, thus signaling their intention to bring him to trial (Wada, 2010; *Japan Today*, 26/09/2010).

**September 19<sup>th</sup> 2010** – Following the decision to extend the detention period of Zhan Qixiong, the Chinese step up their diplomatic pressure against Japan over the coming days. The Japanese Ambassador to the PRC, Uichirō Niwa, is repeatedly summoned at all hours throughout the week by China’s State Councillor Dai Bingguo (Wada, 2010). Beijing suspends all ministerial and higher-level exchanges (as well as cultural

exchanges) with Japan, and cancels talks on increasing air routes and coal usage between the two neighbors (*Japan Times*, 20/09/2010; *Japan Today*, 26/09/2010; *New York Times* 20/09/2010.) The Chinese also warn that they will take ‘strong countermeasures’ if the Japanese persist in detaining the fishing boat captain. Beijing suspends negotiations on a possible treaty over joint development in the ECS and also warns that Chinese tourists will be discouraged from visiting Japan. PRC Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Jiang Yu confirms that PRC marine surveillance vessels have been dispatched to the area ‘to strengthen law-enforcement activities in our relevant waters to safeguard China’s maritime rights and interests’ (*Japan Today*, 26/09/2010). The Chinese authorities also apparently slowed the flow of Japan-related goods into and out of the PRC by carrying out more rigorous customs inspections (*Japan Today*, 28/09/2010).

**September 20<sup>th</sup> 2010** – Four Japanese employees of the ‘Fujita’ company, tasked with removing abandoned chemical weapons are arrested on suspicion of entering a restricted military zone (Wada, 2010).

**September 20<sup>th</sup> 2010** – Prime Minister Naoto Kan mentions specifics ‘countermeasures’ in the East China Sea in the event that China should start drilling activities at the *Chunxiao* gas field (*Japan Times*, 20/09/2010).

**September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2010** – Unconfirmed reports surface that Beijing had allegedly ordered the suspension of exports of economically vital rare earth materials to Japan (Wada, 2010).

**September 24<sup>th</sup> 2010** – After a week of sustained and escalating diplomatic pressure, and citing the importance of the wider relationship, the Kan leadership requests that the charges against the Chinese trawler captain be dropped. The Naha District Public Prosecutor’s Office concedes to the request (Wada, 2010).

**September 26<sup>th</sup> 2010** – A Japanese man is arrested for firing a flare at the Chinese Consulate in Fukuoka, a city in southern Japan. Another man is arrested for a similar incident at the PRC Consulate in Nagasaki (*Japan Times*, 30/09/2010).

**October 1<sup>st</sup> 2010** – Despite the ending of the stand-off, anger over the September incident persists in both countries. In Japan, the government’s ‘appeasement’ of China elicits widespread public indignation. Numerous newspapers condemn the Kan leadership, and media commentators such as Yoshiko Sakurai warn that ‘If Japan gives in on the Senkakus, China will come and grab Okinawa next’. The nationalistic Governor of Tokyo, Shintaro Ishihara cautions ‘What China’s doing is no different from gangsters. If Japan does nothing, it will suffer the same fate as Tibet’(McCormack,2011).

**October 4<sup>th</sup> 2010** – Wen Jiabao and Naoto Kan meet during a meeting in Brussels (*Reuters*, 21/10/2010).

**October 5<sup>th</sup> 2010** – The Mayor and city assembly of Ishigaki city in Okinawa Prefecture call on the Tokyo government to strengthen surveillance and security activities near the Pinnacle Islands (*Japan Times*, 05/10/2010).

**October 5<sup>th</sup> 2010** – During an emotionally charged soccer game between China and Japan, a man runs onto the pitch and snatches the Japanese flag (*Japan Today*, 11/10/2010).

**October 8<sup>th</sup> 2010** - Members of the Taiwan-based ‘Chinese Tiaoyutai Defense Association’ unsuccessfully attempt to land on one of the Pinnacle Islands (*Japan Times*, 10/10/2010).

**October 9<sup>th</sup> 2010** – Four nationalistic members of the Japanese parliament, including a former Cabinet member, Kazuhiro Haraguchi, inspect the Pinnacle Islands from the air (*Japan Times*, 10/10/2010).

**October 11<sup>th</sup> 2010** – Japan and China hold their first ministerial-level meeting since the September incident when Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa and his Chinese counterpart Liang Guanglie meet in Hanoi (*Japan Times*, 11/10/2010).

**October 11<sup>th</sup> 2010** – The last of the Japanese Fujita employees to be detained on suspicion of entering a restricted military zone returns to Japan (*Japan Times*, 11/10/2010).

**October 14<sup>th</sup> 2010** – Japanese Foreign Minister Seiji Maehara, responding to conservative opposition complaints, calls on Internet search engine Google to remove Chinese language references to the Pinnacle Islands on its map services (*China Post*, 15/10/2010).

**October 16<sup>th</sup> 2010** – More than 2,000 Japanese protesters march to the Chinese Embassy in Tokyo, waving Japanese flags and shouting slogans opposing the PRC’s claims to the Pinnacle Islands (*Reuters*, 21/10/2010).

**October 17<sup>th</sup> 2010** – The Chinese leadership calls for ‘rational patriotism’ after mass anti-Japanese protests sometimes numbering up to 10,000 people break out with damage to Japan-related property in regions such as Sichuan Province (*Japan Times*, 18/10/2010).

**October 18<sup>th</sup> 2010** – PRC Vice President Xi Jinping is appointed vice chairman of the Chinese Communist Party's Central Military Commission during the Fifth Plenary Session of the 17th CCP's Central Committee. The move puts Xi in line to succeed Hu Jintao in 2013 (*Japan Times*, 21/10/2010).

**October 21<sup>st</sup> 2010** – China cancels an earlier invitation extended to Osaka Governor Toru Hashimoto to address a Shanghai World Expo-related event. It was suspected that the cancellation took place as a result of the delicate domestic situation at the time. Scheduled nationwide performances in Japan by the ‘China Disabled People’s

Performing Art Troupe' were also cancelled by the group's management team (*Japan Times*, 21/10/2010).

**October 20<sup>th</sup> 2010** – The Japanese Ministry of Defense announced that it will increase its Maritime Self-Defense submarine fleet from 16 to 22 as part of the fiscal 2011-15 basic defense program (*Japan Times*, 21/10/2010).

**October 26<sup>th</sup> 2010** - Tokyo lodges a protest with Beijing over the movement of PRC fisheries patrol vessels near the Pinnacle Islands. The Chinese Embassy in Tokyo also receives a bullet and a threatening protest letter in the post for the second time in a month (*Japan Times*, 26/10/2010).

**October 27<sup>th</sup> 2010** – Chinese journalists reveal that the Party leadership has been placing strict controls on how local media outlets report on anti-Japan demonstrations and other Japan-related information in an effort to curtail further protests (*Japan Today*, 27/10/2010).

**October 30<sup>th</sup> 2010** – International media outlets declare that the PRC's unofficial embargo on exports of rare earth minerals has ended (*Japan Times*, 30/10/2010).

**November 5<sup>th</sup> 2010** – A video of the September 7<sup>th</sup> incident is secretly posted on to YouTube by a member of the Japanese Coast Guard who had witnessed it. The hitherto unseen footage of the Chinese ship ramming JCG vessels causes uproar in Japan, feeds calls for a more forceful response in the ECS, and makes the Kan leadership look weak for having called for charges to be dropped against the Chinese captain.

**November 5<sup>th</sup> 2010** – The Japanese media report that suspicious liquids have been sent to the Chinese Embassy and five other PRC diplomatic establishments in Japan (*Japan Today*, 05/11/2010).

**November 8<sup>th</sup> 2010** – The state-run Chinese newspaper 'Global Times' blames the behavior of Japan's 'hawkish', 'political extremist' Foreign Minister Seiji Maehara for the cancellation of planned talks between the premiers of China and Japan in the previous week on the sidelines of ASEAN regional meetings in Hanoi (*Japan Today*, 08/11/2010).

**November 14<sup>th</sup> 2010** – Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi tells Japanese diplomats during a meeting in Yokohama that a suitable environment is necessary before talks on the East China Sea could re-open (*Reuters*, 14/11/2010).

**November 17<sup>th</sup> 2010** – A public opinion survey conducted by the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper reveals that public approval for Prime Minister Kan and his cabinet has fallen to 27%. The survey revealed that the government's poor handling of foreign policy issues such as the East China Sea was the most significant factor in the low approval rate. Opposition-led no confidence motions are also submitted against Chief Cabinet Secretary

Yoshito Sengoku and Transport Minister Sumio Mabuchi. The motion is defeated by Japan's Lower House (*Asahi Shimbun*, 17/11/2010).

**November 28<sup>th</sup> 2010** – The Japanese media reports that the state's Defense Ministry is considering doubling the number of ground troops deployed in Okinawa and its surrounding islands (*Japan Today*, 28/11/2010).

**November 28<sup>th</sup> 2010** – Two PRC fishery patrol vessels are spotted off the Pinnacle Islands and are warned by the JCG not to enter Japanese waters (*Japan Times*, 29/11/2010).

**December 17<sup>th</sup> 2010** – China protests when two Japanese local assembly members land on one of the Pinnacle Islands the day before, and states that the action seriously infringed China's territorial sovereignty (*Japan Today*, 17/12/2010).

**December 18<sup>th</sup> 2010** – China protests the decision by politicians in the city of Ishigaki, Okinawa Prefecture, to establish a 'Pioneering Day' on January 14<sup>th</sup> honoring the 1895 territorial integration of the Senkaku Islands (*Japan Times*, 18/12/2010).

**December 18<sup>th</sup> 2010** – Government polls reveal that positive Japanese sentiments towards China are at an all-time low. The survey found that 78 percent of Japanese did not feel friendly toward the PRC, a jump of 19 points from the previous year (*AFP*, 18/12/2010).

**December 20<sup>th</sup> 2010** – Beijing condemns Japan's adoption of revised National Defense Program Guidelines and its comments that China's military rise and other actions are a 'matter of concern for the region and the international community' (*UPI.com*, 20/12/2010).

**January 21<sup>st</sup> 2011** – Japanese prosecutors announce that they will formally drop charges against the Chinese trawler captain at the centre of the alleged boat ramming incident near the Pinnacle Islands in September. The Japanese ex-coast guard officer who admitted leaking a classified video of the incident on the internet is also informed that he will not face charges (*BBC News*, 21/01/2011).

**February 1<sup>st</sup> 2011** – Diplomatic sources reveal that the two governments are considering holding a vice-ministerial meeting in late February to discuss ways to prevent a re-occurrence of incidents in maritime areas such as witnessed in September 2010. They also plan to discuss frictions on the Korean Peninsula, Japan's new defense guidelines, and stalled talks on possible joint development in the East China Sea. The discussions will mark the first bilateral strategic dialogue since June 2009 (*Japan Today*, 02/02/2011).

**March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2011** – Tokyo states that it will not lodge a complaint against Beijing for dispatching two military aircraft near the Pinnacle Islands but outside of Japanese airspace. JASDF fighter planes were scrambled in response to the incident. Despite not submitting a formal complaint, the Japanese express concern about Chinese behavior in the area (*Sify.com*, 05/03/2011).

**March 7<sup>th</sup> 2011** – Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi calls on Japan to take ‘credible steps’ to prevent maritime incidents near the Pinnacle Islands. He also declares that the two countries should pursue joint efforts to make sure that no one single issue will hurt the wider interests of the Japan and China relationship (*Japan Times*, 08/03/2011).

**March 9<sup>th</sup> 2011** – Tokyo expresses regret over reports that the Chinese were engaged in oil production at a disputed gas field in the East China Sea. Senior Chinese figures apparently refuted the claim by stating that the energy company concerned was merely engaged in maintenance and repair activities (*MonstersandCritics*, 09/03/2011).

**March 9<sup>th</sup> 2011** – Seiji Maehara resigns as Japan’s Foreign Minister after a political donations scandal. His replacement, Takeaki Matsumoto, promises to help repair the relationship with China while simultaneously expressing concerns over the PRC’s expanding maritime and military activities in the East China Sea and elsewhere (*Sify.com*, 11/03/2011).

**March 11<sup>th</sup> 2011** – Japan suffers its worst domestic crisis since the end of the Second World War when the country’s north-eastern coast is ravaged by a combined earthquake and tsunami disaster.

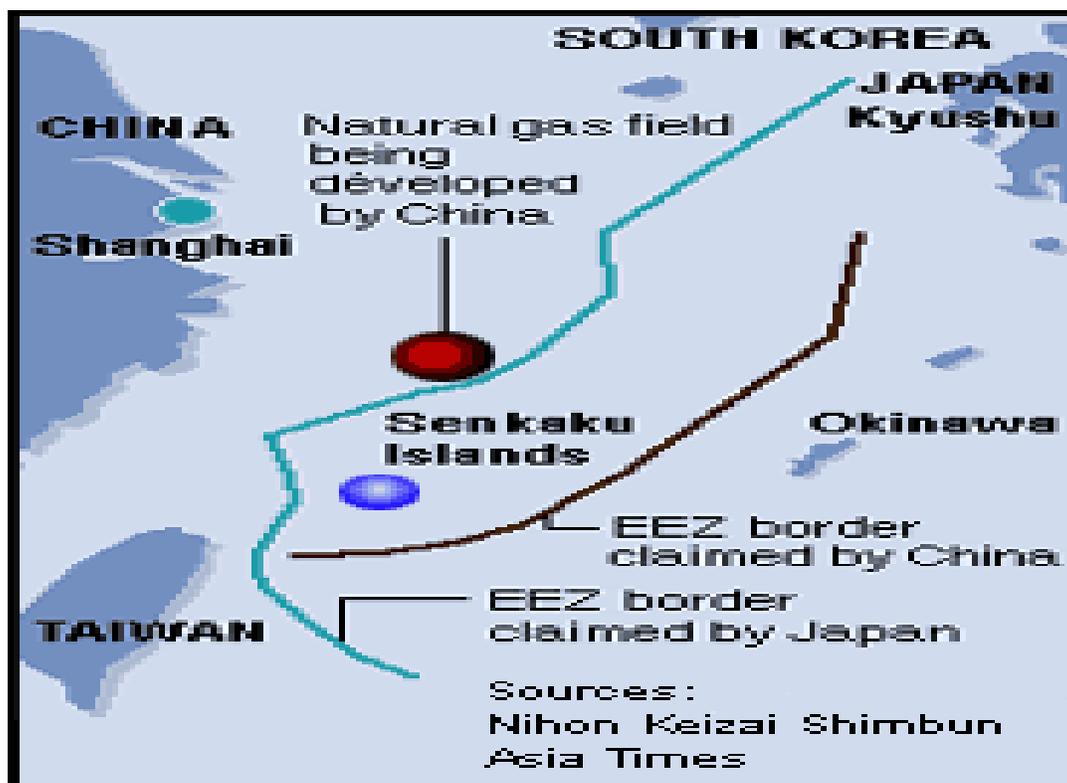
**March 31<sup>st</sup> 2011** – The PRC dismisses claims and complaints by Japan that a Chinese helicopter had flown too close to a JMSDF destroyer in the East China Sea on the previous Saturday. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu declares that the helicopter was carrying out regular patrols and that it had maintained the necessary safe distance from the Japanese vessel. The media in Japan claims that the incident was ‘extremely deplorable’ at a time when Japan was concentrating on recovery efforts following the March 11<sup>th</sup> disaster (*Xinhua*, 31/03/2011).

**June 4<sup>th</sup> 2011** – During bilateral talks held on the sidelines of an Asian security forum in Singapore, the defense ministers of Japan and China agree to resume full-fledged bilateral defense talks following the disruption caused by the September 7<sup>th</sup> incident. They also promise to speed up working level talks on a communication system to deal with maritime incidents (*Daily Yomiuri*, 06/06/2011).

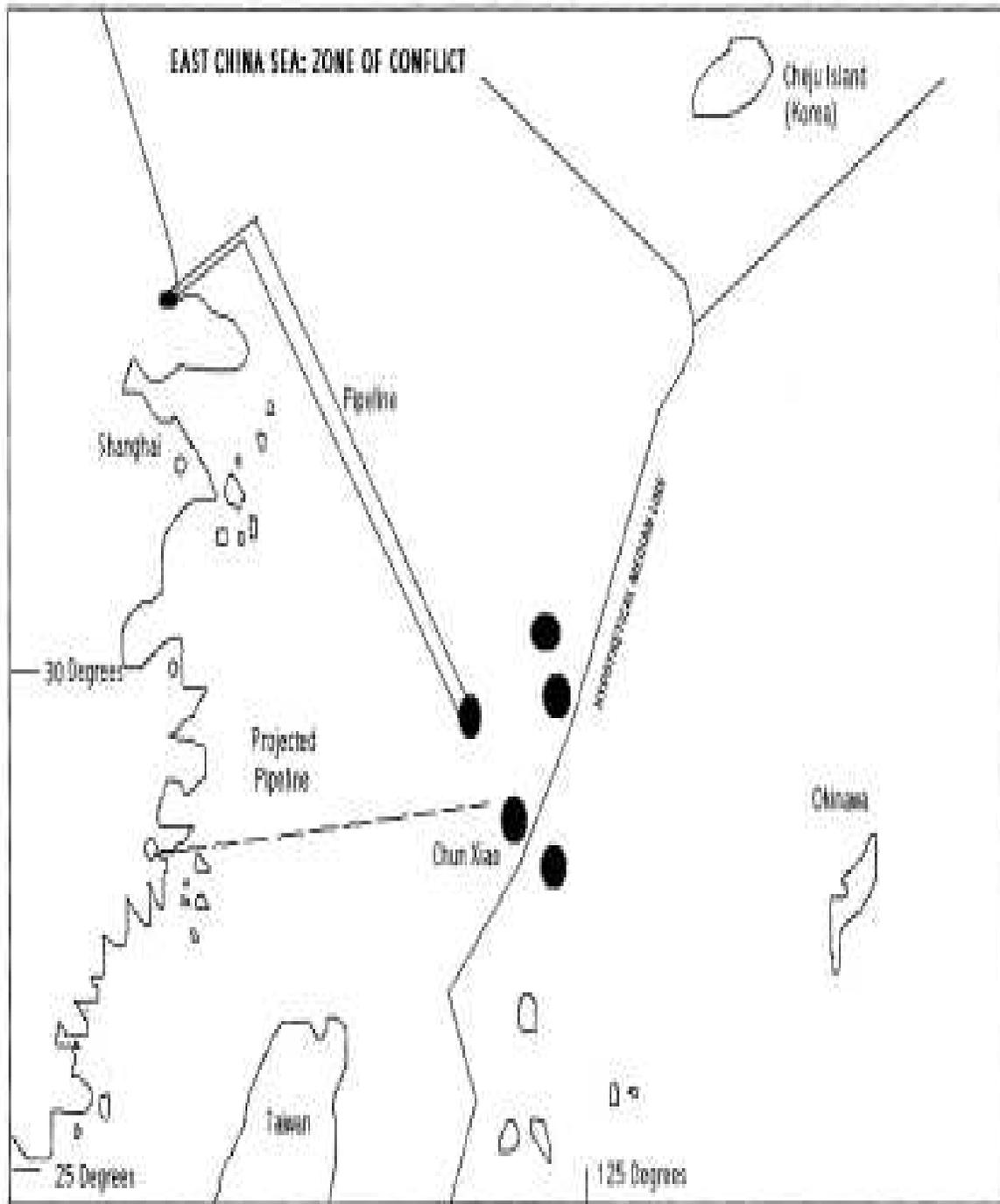
**June 29<sup>th</sup> 2011** – Beijing reprimands Tokyo following a confrontation between Taiwanese nationalists in fishing boats, and vessels from the Japanese Coast Guard (JCG) (*China Post*, 04/07/2011).

**July 4<sup>th</sup> 2011** – Led by the disgraced former JASDF chief and nationalist Toshio Tamogami, a group of Japanese activists in a fleet of nine fishing vessels go fishing in waters near the Pinnacle Islands in order to emphasize their country's claim. China lodges a protest about the incident (*China Post*, 04/07/2011).

## Maps, Figures, Illustrations, Surveys and Photos

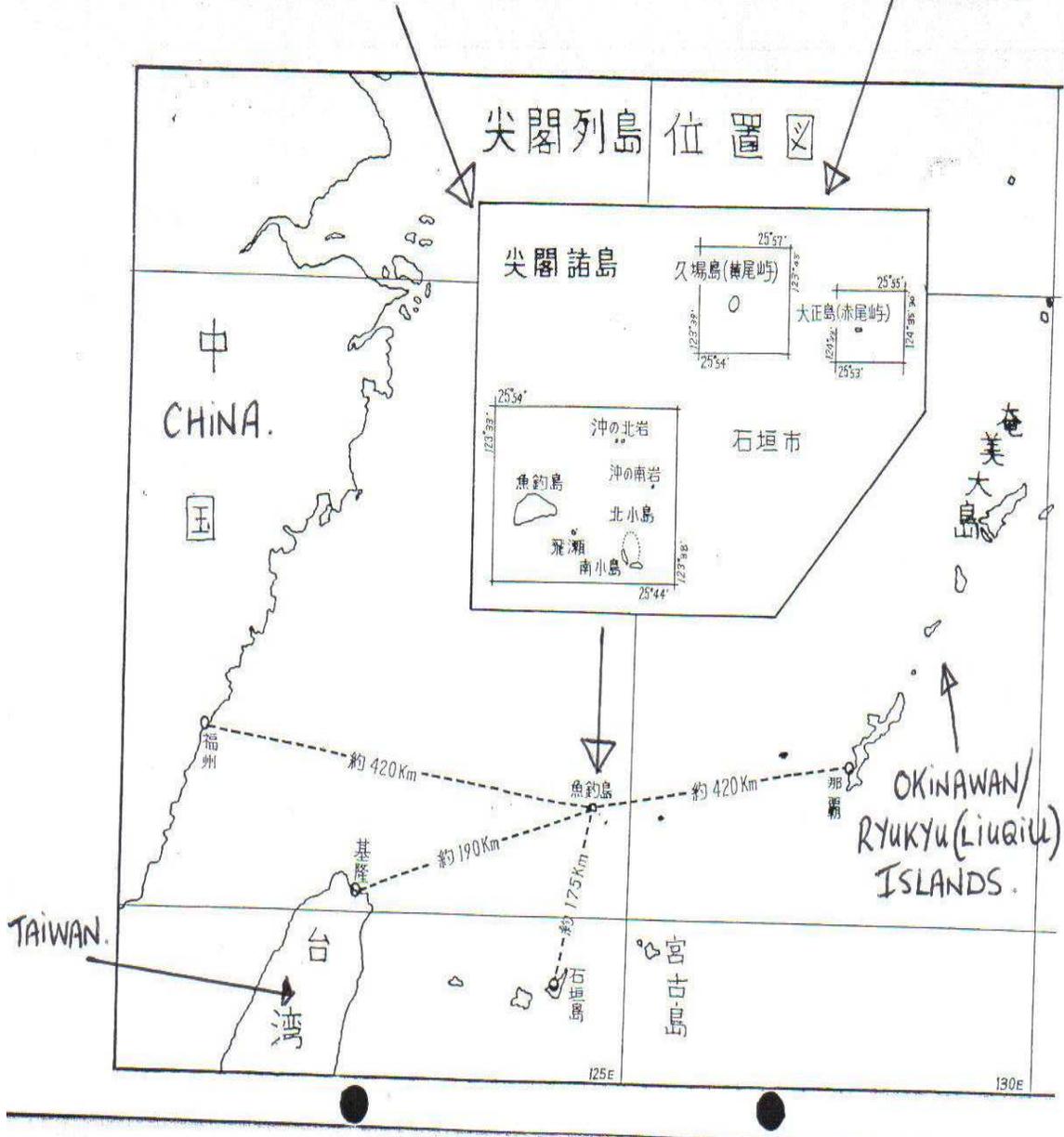


Source: 'East China Sea', Energy Information Administration – Official Energy Statistics from the US Government, [http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/East\\_China\\_Sea/Background.html](http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/East_China_Sea/Background.html). Accessed on 28/06/2009.



(‘Hypothetical Median Line’ and ‘Okinawa’ are shown (blurred) on the right). Source: Harrison (2005) .

THE PINNACLE (SENKAKU/DIAOYUTAI) ISLANDS (WITH ENLARGEMENT INSET)



A Japanese map highlighting the Pinnacle (*Sneak/Diary*) Islands. Source: The author wishes to thank Professor Yasuji Ishigaki of Tokai University, Japan for this (see Interview No. 15 for details).

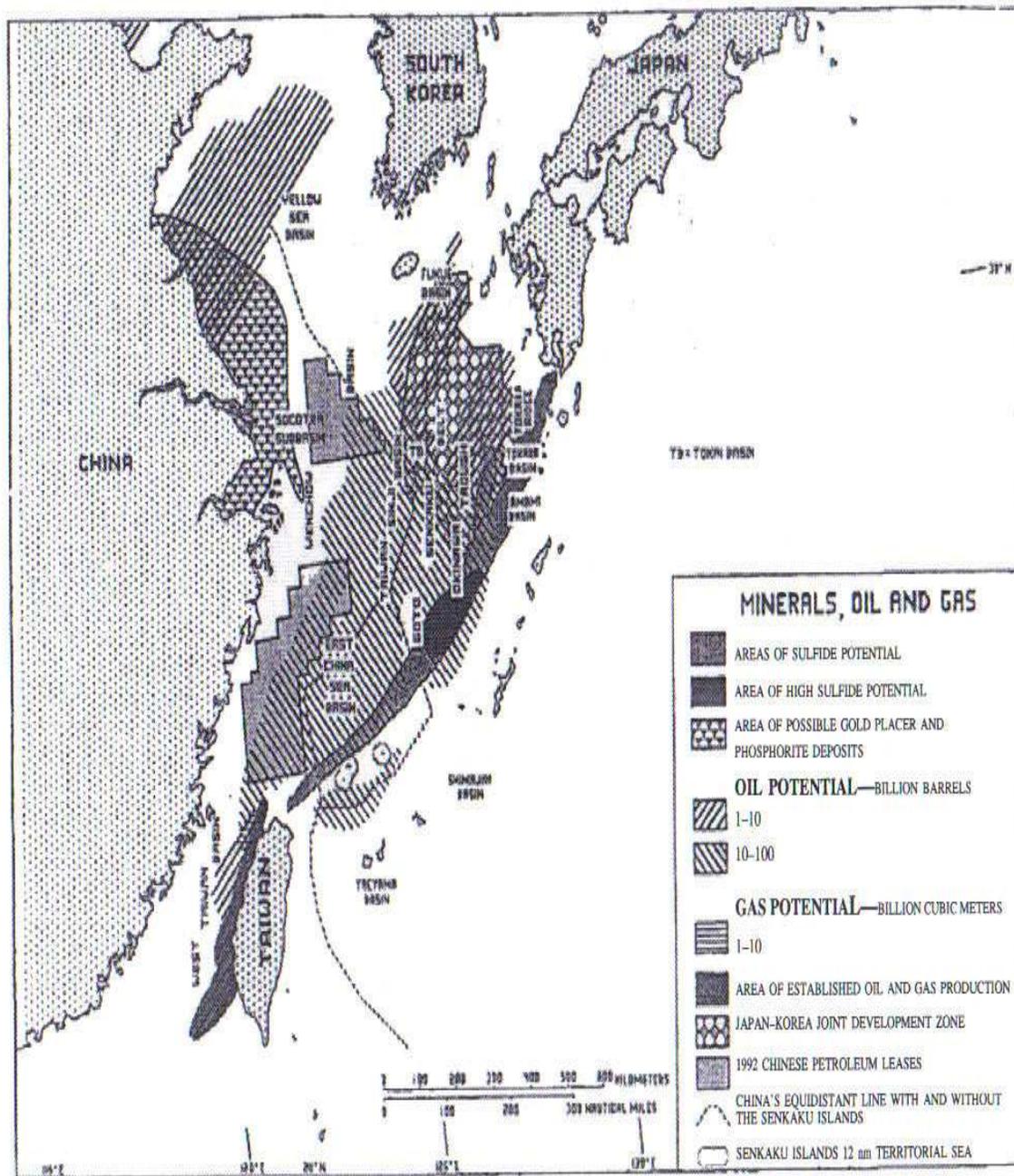
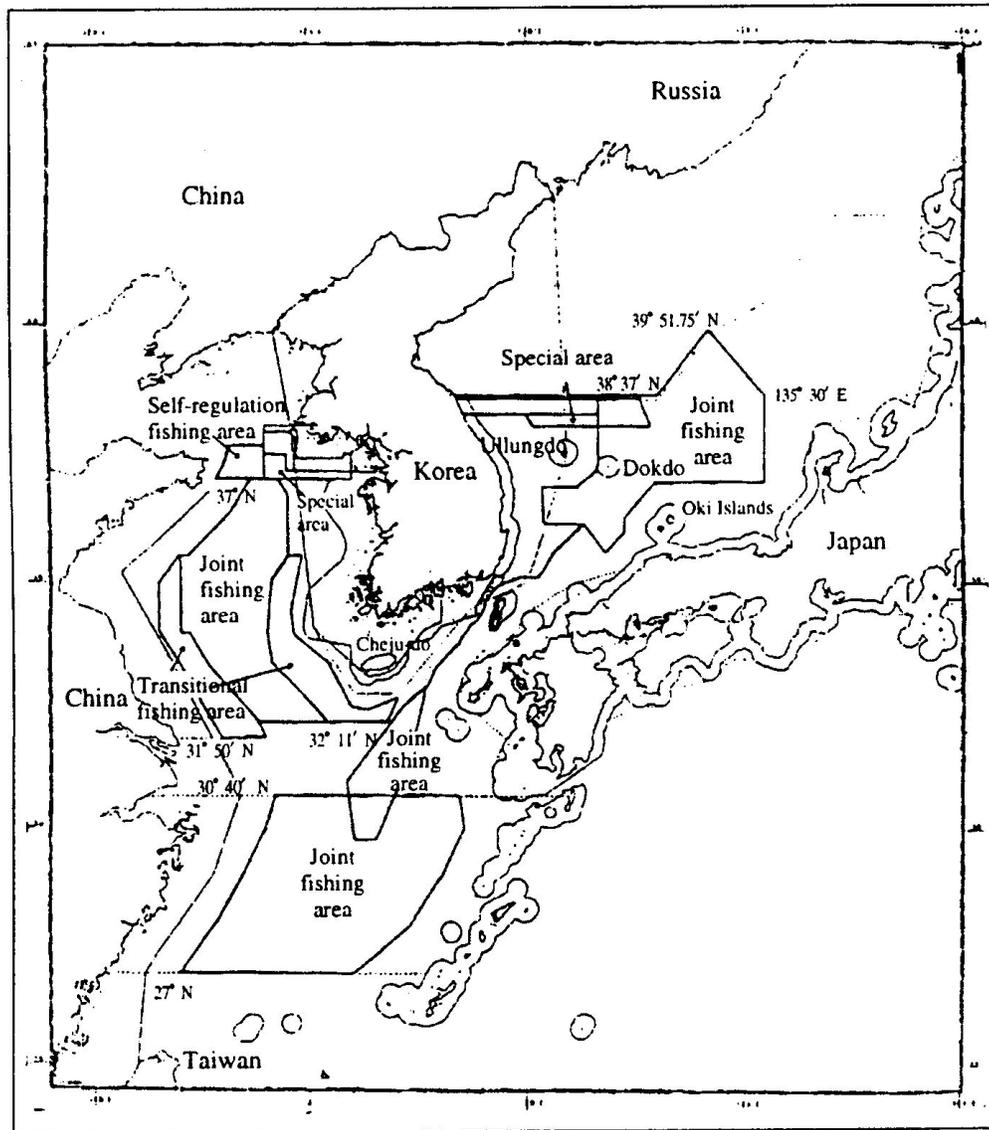


Figure 1. Petroleum and mineral resources of the East China Sea. [Source: Noel A. Ludwig and Mark J. Valencia, "Oil and Mineral Resources of the East China Prospects in Relation to Maritime Boundaries," *Geojournal* 30(4) (1993).]

Source: Valencia and Amae, (2003).



**Figure 2.** Joint fishing areas in Northeast Asian Seas. [Source: Chi Young Pak, "Resettlement of the Fisheries Order in Northeast Asia Resulting from the New Fisheries Agreements Among Korea, Japan, and China," *Korea Observer* XXX (Institute of Korean Studies, Winter, 1999).]

Source: Valencia and Amae, (2003).

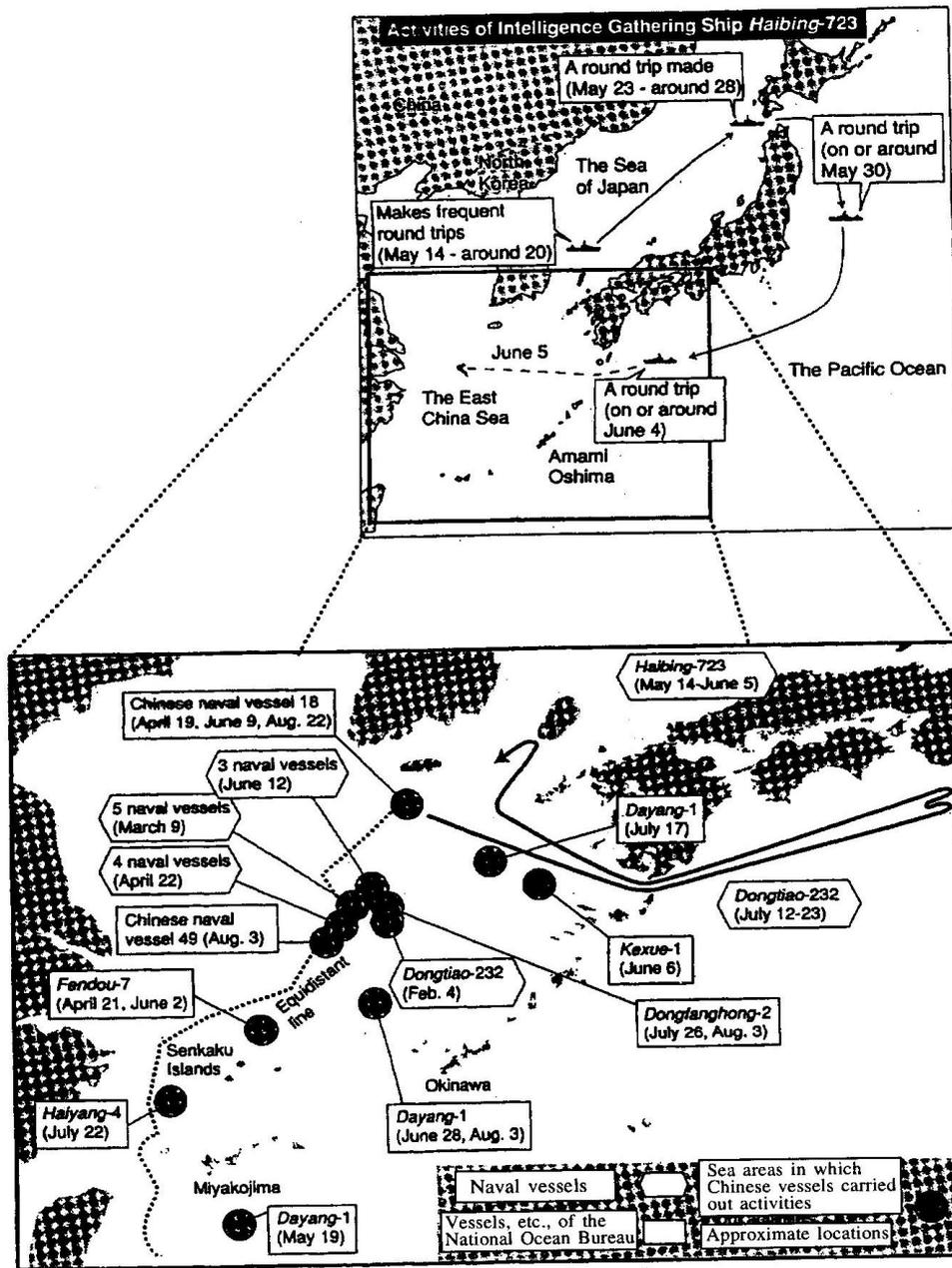


Figure 3. Activities of Chinese Naval Vessels in the East China Sea (2000). (Source: Compiled on the basis of the data drawn from published materials of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force.)

Source: Valencia and Amae, (2003).

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**The articles relevant to East China Sea dispute  
in UN Convention on the law of the sea(1982)**

**Article 59**

*Basis for the resolution of conflicts regarding the attribution of rights and jurisdiction in the exclusive economic zone*

In cases where this Convention does not attribute rights or jurisdiction to the coastal State or to other States within the exclusive economic zone, and a conflict arises between the interests of the coastal State and any other State or States, the conflict should be resolved **on the basis of equity and in the light of all the relevant circumstances**, taking into account the respective importance of the interests involved to the parties as well as to the international community as a whole.

**Article 74**

*Delimitation of the exclusive economic zone between States with opposite or adjacent coasts*

1. The delimitation of the exclusive economic zone between States with opposite or adjacent coasts shall be effected by agreement on the basis of international law, as referred to in article 38 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice, **in order to achieve an equitable solution.**

**Article 76**

*Definition of the continental shelf*

1. The continental shelf of a coastal State comprises the sea-bed and subsoil of the submarine areas that extend beyond its territorial sea **throughout the natural prolongation of its land territory to the outer edge of the continental margin**, or to a distance of 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured where the outer edge of the continental margin does not extend up to that distance.

Document used by Jinsong Liu (First Secretary for Political and Regional Affairs, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Japan) to outline China's points of view on the East China Sea disputes at a discussion entitled 'Japan's Territorial Disputes with China and South Korea: Co-operation or Conflict', at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan held in Tokyo on June 7<sup>th</sup> 2006. Sentences from UNCLOS supporting China's position are intentionally highlighted in bold black print by Jinsong Liu. The author wishes to thank Sam Jameson for these (see Interview No.2 details).

## Article 77

### Rights of the coastal State over the continental shelf

1. The coastal State exercises over the continental shelf **sovereign rights** for the purpose of exploring it and exploiting its natural resources.
2. The rights referred to in paragraph 1 are exclusive in the sense that if the coastal State does not explore the continental shelf or exploit its natural resources, **no one may undertake these activities without the express consent of the coastal State.**
3. The rights of the coastal State over the continental shelf do not depend on occupation, effective or notional, or on any express proclamation.

## *Article 58*

### *Rights and duties of other States in the exclusive economic zone*

1. In the exclusive economic zone all States, whether coastal or land-locked, enjoy, subject to the relevant provisions of this Convention, the **freedoms** referred to in article 87 of **navigation and overflight and of the laying of submarine cables and pipelines, and other internationally lawful uses of the sea related to these freedoms**, such as those associated with the operation of ships, aircraft and submarine cables and pipelines, and compatible with the other provisions of this Convention

## *Article 78*

### *Legal status of the superjacent waters and air space and the rights and freedoms of other States*

1. The rights of the coastal State over the continental shelf do not affect the legal status of the superjacent waters or of the air space above those waters.
2. The exercise of the rights of the coastal State over the continental shelf must **not infringe or result in any unjustifiable interference with navigation and other rights and freedoms of other States** as provided for in this Convention.

Document used by Jinsong Liu (First Secretary for Political and Regional Affairs, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Japan) to outline China's points of view on the East China Sea disputes at a discussion entitled 'Japan's Territorial Disputes with China and South Korea: Co-operation or Conflict', at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan held in Tokyo on 07/06/2006. Sentences from UNCLOS supporting China's position are intentionally highlighted in bold black print by Jinsong Liu. The author wishes to thank Sam Jameson for these (see Interview No.2 details).

**Article 81**

*Drilling on the continental shelf*

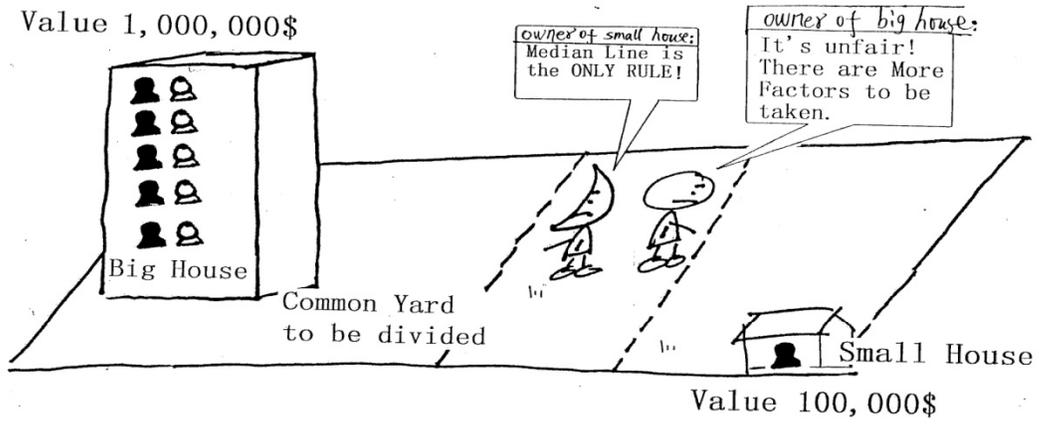
The coastal State shall have the **exclusive right** to authorize and regulate drilling on the continental shelf for all purposes.

**Article 83**

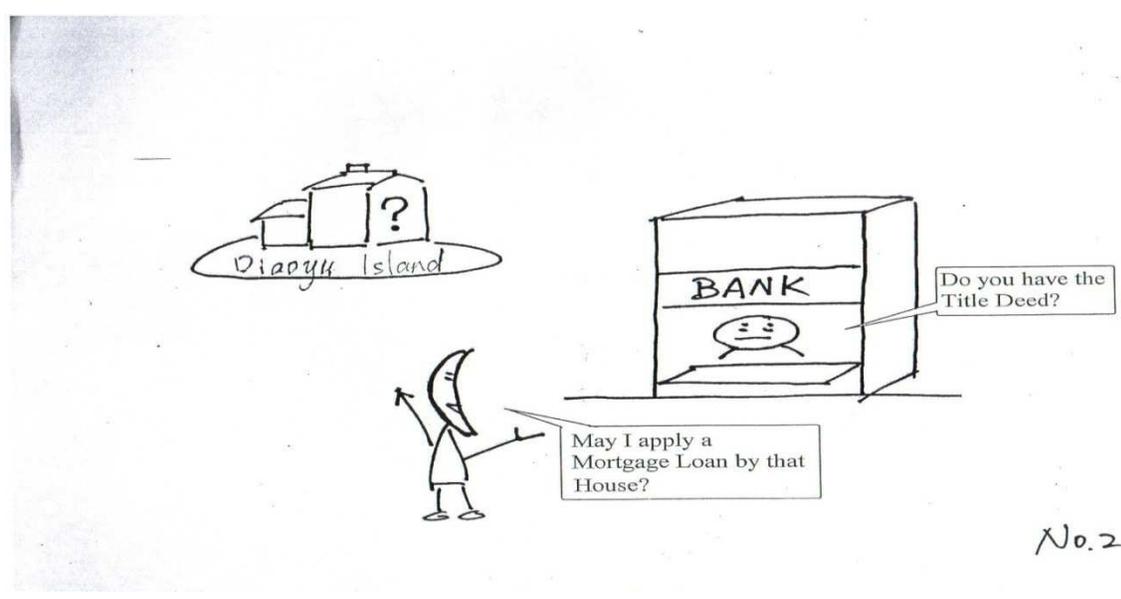
*Delimitation of the continental shelf between States with opposite or adjacent coasts*

1. The delimitation of the continental shelf between States with opposite or adjacent coasts shall be effected by agreement on the basis of international law, as referred to in article 38 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice,, in order to achieve an **equitable solution**.

Document used by Jinsong Liu (First Secretary for Political and Regional Affairs, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Japan) to outline China's points of view on the East China Sea disputes at a discussion entitled 'Japan's Territorial Disputes with China and South Korea: Co-operation or Conflict', at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan held in Tokyo on 07/06/2006. Sentences from UNCLOS supporting China's position are intentionally highlighted in bold black print by Jinsong Liu. The author wishes to thank Sam Jameson for these (see Interview No.2 details).

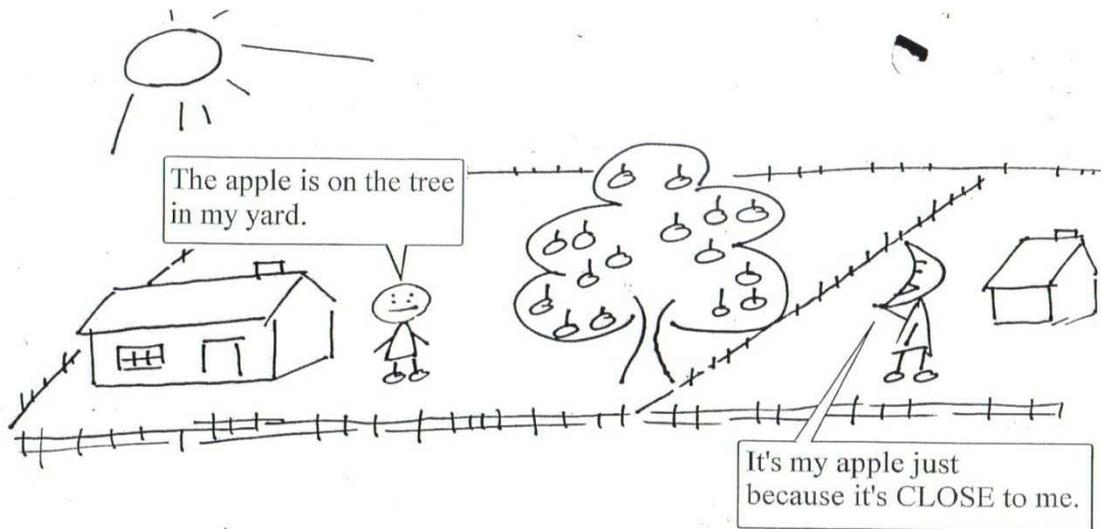


No. 1



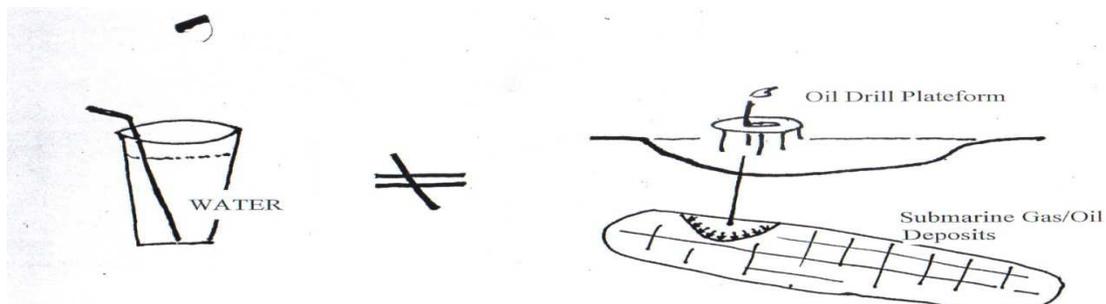
No. 2

Illustrations used by Jinsong Liu (First Secretary for Political and Regional Affairs, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Japan) to outline China's points of view on the East China Sea disputes at a discussion entitled 'Japan's Territorial Disputes with China and South Korea: Co-operation or Conflict', at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan held in Tokyo on 07/06/2006. The figure with the crescent-shaped head represents Japan. The author wishes to thank Sam Jameson for these (see Interview No.2 for details).



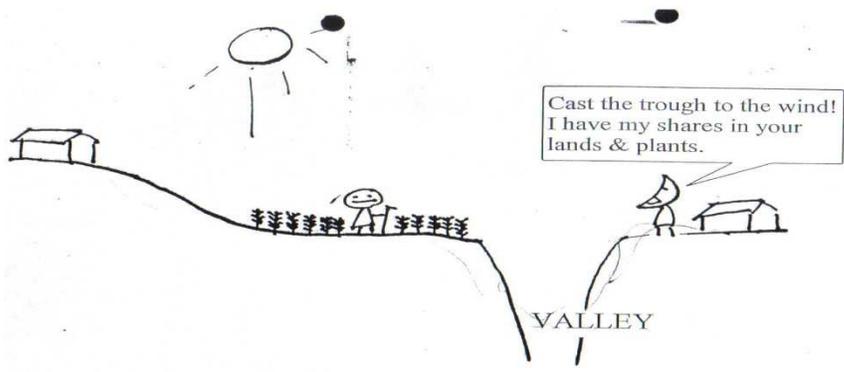
No.3

When shown this illustration (Number 3), Professor Liu Nanlai of CASS (Beijing), a leading scholar of China's maritime disputes, argued that that it was 'completely right' in terms of China's point of view regarding the East China Sea disputes. See Interview No.45 for details. The author wishes to thank Sam Jameson for these (see Interview No.2 for details).

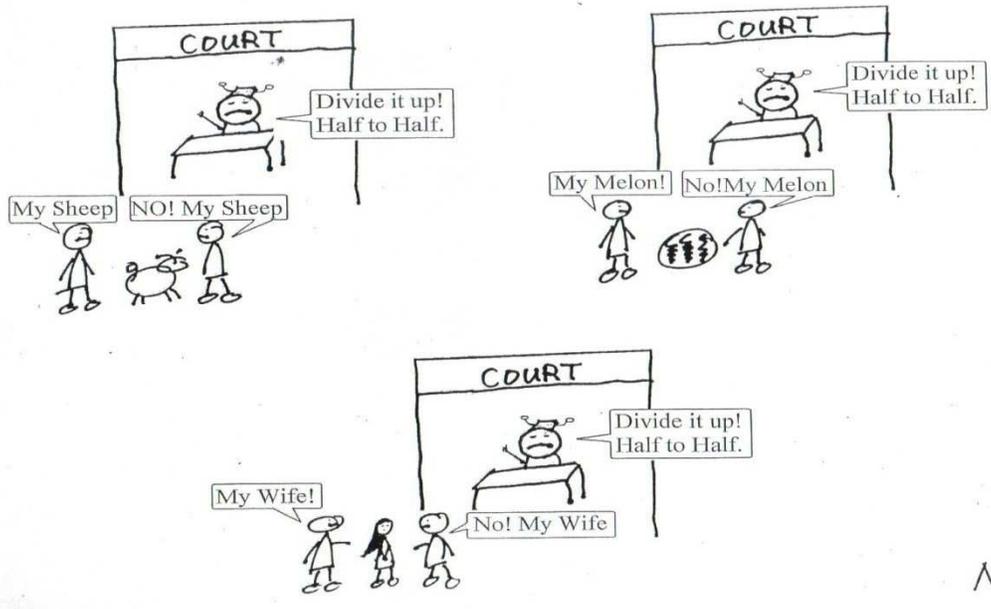


No.4

Illustrations used by Jinsong Liu (First Secretary for Political and Regional Affairs, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Japan) to outline China's points of view on the East China Sea disputes at a discussion entitled 'Japan's Territorial Disputes with China and South Korea: Co-operation or Conflict', at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan held in Tokyo on 07/06/2006. The figure with the crescent-shaped head represents Japan. The author wishes to thank Sam Jameson for these (see Interview No.2 for details).



No.5



No.6

Illustrations used by Jinsong Liu (First Secretary for Political and Regional Affairs, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Japan) to outline China's points of view on the East China Sea disputes at a discussion entitled 'Japan's Territorial Disputes with China and South Korea: Co-operation or Conflict', at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan held in Tokyo on 07/06/2006. The figure with the crescent-shaped head represents Japan. The author wishes to thank Sam Jameson (see Interview No.2 for details).

Table 1 Chronology of East China Sea Consultations, 2004–2008

Japan-China Consultations concerning the East China Sea and Other Matters (Higashi Shinakai to ni kansuru Nitchū Kyōgi), director-general level	
1st round of the Japan-China Consultations concerning the East China Sea and Other Matters	25 October 2004
2nd round of the Japan-China Consultations concerning the East China Sea and Other Matters	30-31 May 2005
3rd round of the Japan-China Consultations concerning the East China Sea and Other Matters	30 September-1 Oct 2005
Informal Japan-China Consultations concerning the East China Sea and Other Matters	January 2006
4th round of the Japan-China Consultations concerning the East China Sea and Other Matters	6-7 March 2006
5th round of the Japan-China Consultations concerning the East China Sea and Other Matters	18 May 2006
6th round of the Japan-China Consultations concerning the East China Sea and Other Matters	8-9 July 2006
7th round of the Japan-China Consultations concerning the East China Sea and Other Matters	29 March 2007
8th round of the Japan-China Consultations concerning the East China Sea and Other Matters	25 May 2007
9th round of the Japan-China Consultations concerning the East China Sea and Other Matters	26 June 2007
10th round of the Japan-China Consultations concerning the East China Sea and Other Matters	11 October 2007
11th round of the Japan-China Consultations concerning the East China Sea and Other Matters	14 November 2007
1st Ministerial meeting in Beijing	1 December 2007
Prime minister Yasuo Fukuda's visit to the People's Republic of China	27-30 December 2007
Japan-China Strategic Dialogue in Beijing	22-23 February 2008
President Hu Jintao's official visit to Japan	6-10 May 2008
Foreign minister Yang Jiechi's visit to Japan	14 June 2008
Announcement of the Joint Press Statement	18 June 2008

Source: E-mail from the China Division of MOFA to the author on 20 November 2006 and 25 June 2008.

Source: (Drifte, 2008a:15).



Caption: A photo showing the arrest of some Chinese protesters (in orange jackets) who landed on the Japanese administered Pinnacle (*Senkaku/Diaoyu*) Islands in March 2004. The protesters (seven in total) were charged with illegal entry of a foreign state and were later sent back to China after questioning. The arrests prompted a small scale protest outside the Japanese Embassy in Beijing with protesters burning Japanese flags and chanting ‘The Chinese people cannot be insulted.’ Source: *Taipei Times*, 26/03/2004.



Caption: A bus belonging to a Japanese right-wing group crashed into the front gate of the Chinese consulate in Osaka, western Japan, April 23, 2004. The man ramming the bus into the consulate has been arrested by Japanese police. Japanese cabinet secretary apologized for this. Source: *People’s Daily*, 25/06/2004.



Caption: Chinese demonstrators clashed with the police Sunday in Guangzhou in front of a Japanese-owned store. Source: *New York Times*, 11/04/ 2005.



Anti-Japan Protesters in China, April 2005. Source: *Voice of America*, 13/04/2005.



Caption: Protesters marched in Hong Kong today to denounce Japan, as anger at Japan's record in World War II spilled over from mainland China. Source: *New York Times*, 18/04/2005.



Caption: Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, ignoring criticism from both home and abroad, visits the Yasukuni Shrine which honors Japan's 14 notorious class-A war criminals of World War II, in Tokyo, capital of Japan, Aug.15, 2006. Source: *Xinhua*, 16/08/2006.



Caption: Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing (1st R) talks with Japanese Ambassador to China Miyamoto Yuji in Beijing, China, on Aug. 15, 2006. Li Zhaoxing lodged serious and solemn representations, and strong protests against Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's sixth visit to the war criminals-honoring Yasukuni Shrine. Source: *Xinhua*, 16/08/2006.



Caption: Japan Coast Guard video handout image of a Chinese boat carrying some 25 Hong Kong protesters approaching the disputed Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, Friday 27 October 2006. The protesters were repelled from the islands by a Japanese Coast Guard ship (in background) after being sprayed with water. The islands are disputed by Japan, China and Taiwan. Source: *Military Photos.net*, 2006.



Illustration used by Vice Admiral (Ret.) Fumio Ota (Japan) to highlight his views regarding the Chinese military's use of force since 1949. Source: Ota, Fumio (2009).

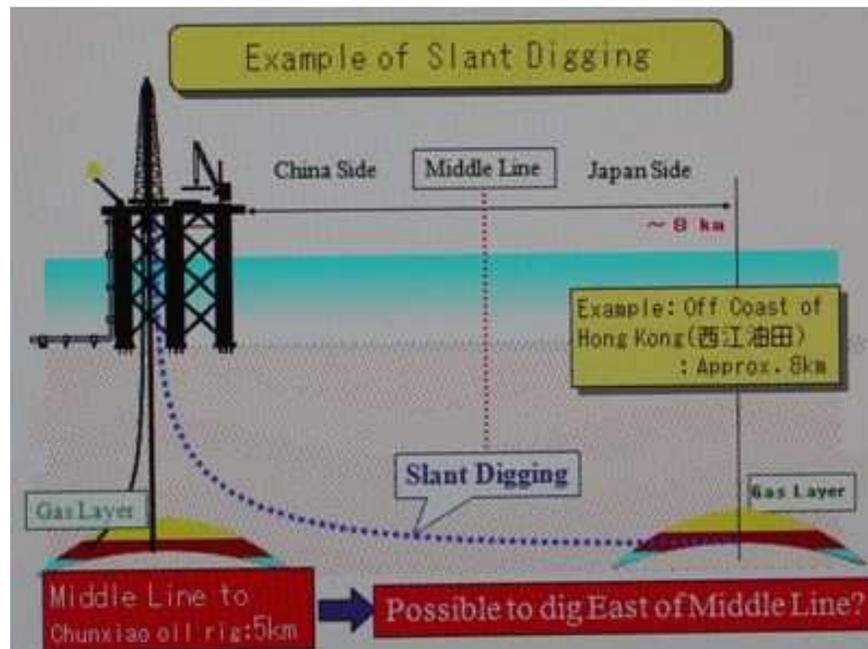
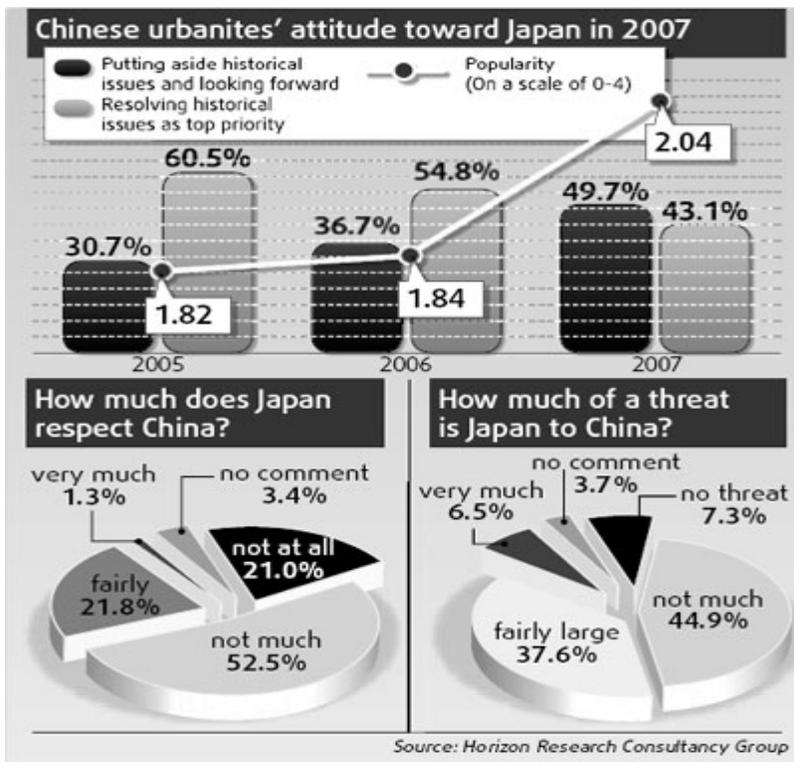


Illustration used by Vice Admiral (Ret.) Fumio Ota (Japan) to augment his view that China is surreptitiously siphoning resources from Japan's EEZ. Source: Ota, Fumio (2009).



Photograph of a Chinese PLAN ship patrolling near a Chinese rig in the East China Sea.  
Source: Ota, Fumio (2009).

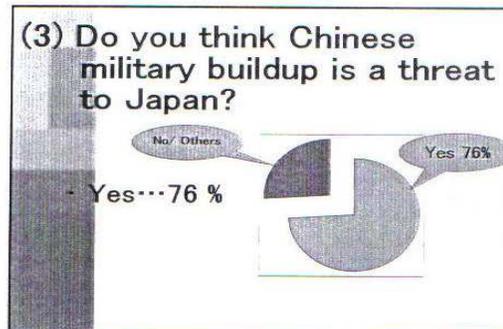
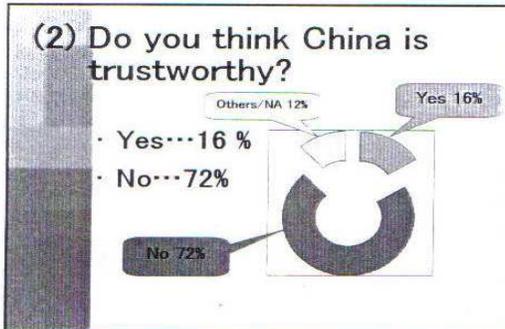
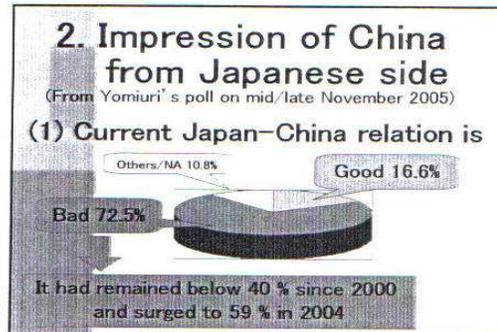


Source: *China Daily*, 07/05/2008.

Ocean Security in Northeast Asia  
 THE Shanghai MEETING  
 25-26 May 2006

**The Sino-Japan Relation and  
 Ocean Security: Problems and  
 Cooperation**

LTG (Ret) Masahiro Kunimi  
 Special Adviser Ocean  
 Policy Research Foundation  
 JAPAN



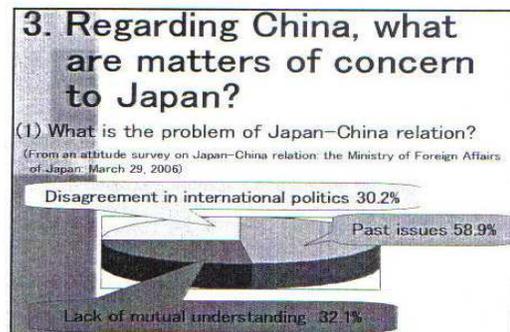
(4) Number of times Air Self-Defense Force scrambled to intercept Chinese military planes are

107 times (from April 2004 to March 2005)

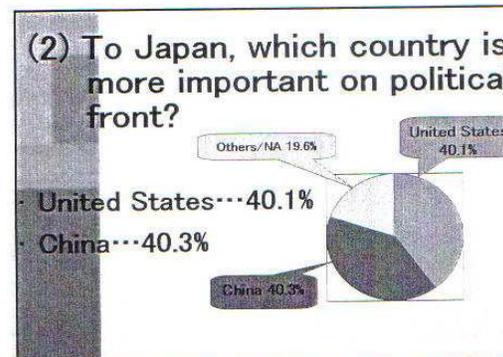
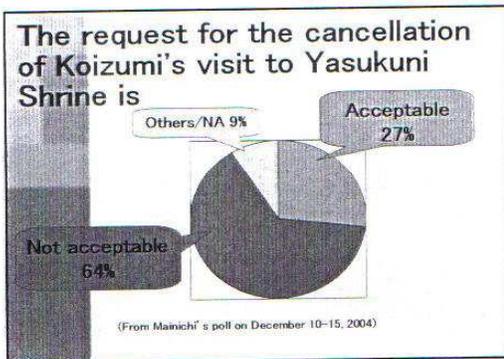
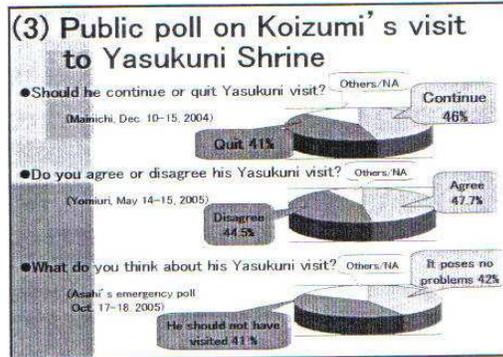
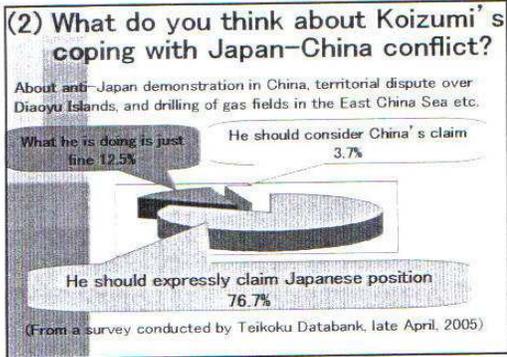
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**Eightfold increase over the previous year**

(From Japan Defense Agency announcement, released on April 20, 2006)



Source: Kunimi, 2006.



Source: Kunimi, 2006.



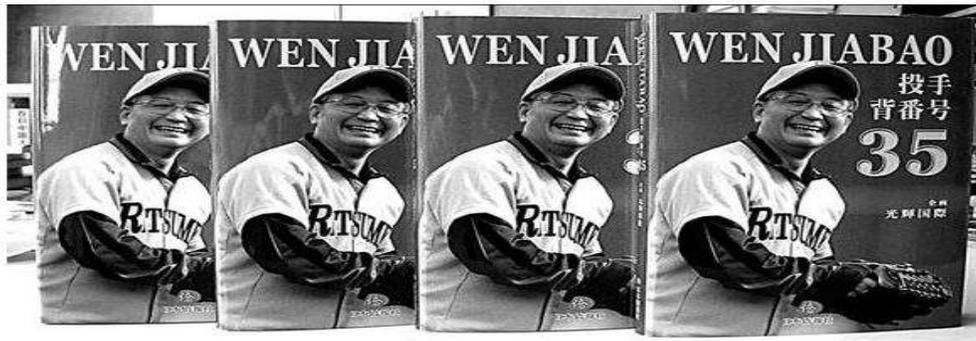
Caption: Well-wishers wave Chinese and Japanese national flags as China's missile destroyer 'Shenzhen' leaves Tokyo's Harumi wharf, December 1, 2007, concluding the PLA's first-ever warship visit to Japan. Source: *Sina English*, 03/12/2007.

**CHINA DAILY** / Page 2

## China, Japan in talks over Fukuda's visit

By Le Tian

Updated: 2007-12-19 07:11



High-profile pitcher Wen Jiabao, Pitcher No. 35, a book documenting the premier's ice-breaking visit to Japan this year, went on sale in Japan yesterday. During his visit in April, Wen played baseball with Ritsumeikan University students in which he wore a baseball outfit with the number 35 to symbolize the 35th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The book has been published to commemorate the milestone. Duan Yuezhong

Source: *China Daily*, 19/12/2007.



Caption: Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda speaks during an interview with Xinhua and other Chinese media at the prime minister's office in Tokyo, Japan, Dec. 25, 2007. Source: *Xinhua*, 26/12/2007.



Caption: 'Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao (L) plays baseball with his Japanese counterpart Yasuo Fukuda at the Diaoyutai State Guest House in Beijing Saturday morning, December 29, 2007.' Professor Akio Takahara of Tokyo University claimed that the dissemination of such photos in China and Japan by Beijing's propaganda department, showing normally reserved and staid politicians in baseball attire, was aimed at proving that the CCP is serious about improving relations with Japan (see Interview No.66 for details). Source: *Xinhua*, 29/12/2007.



Caption: Chinese President Hu Jintao (C) has an interview with Japanese journalists at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, May 4, 2008. Source: *Xinhua*, 04/05/2008.



Caption: ‘Japanese rescue members [in the aftermath of the Sichuan earthquake of May 2008] pay respects to the bodies of the female victim Song Aimei and her 70-day-old baby after 16 hours of searching through the debris in Qingchuan County, Sichuan Province.’ According to Professor Ryosei Kokubun of Keio University (Japan), the CCP allowed the publication of this photo via media sources throughout the PRC in the hope of creating a more positive image of Japan amongst ordinary Chinese people after a previously cold chill in Sino-Japanese relations (see Interview No.65 for details). Source: *China Daily*, 21/05/2008.



Map showing details of the June 2008 East China Sea 'principled consensus.' *Shirakaba* is the Japanese name for the *Chunxiao* (Chinese name) gas field. Source: *Japan Times*, 19/06/2008.



Caption: A girl waves Chinese and Japanese national flags to welcome the visiting Japanese destroyer Sazanami in Zhanjiang, South China's Guangdong Province June 24, 2008. Source: *Xinhua*, 28/06/2008.



Caption: A crewmember from the Japanese destroyer Sazanami signs autographs for Chinese students in Zhanjiang, Guangdong province, on Friday, during the vessel's five-day stay in China. It was the first time for a Japanese naval ship to visit China in six decades. Source: *China Daily*, 30/06/2008.

## **List of Interviewees**

### **Background**

Chinese experts interviewed (directly or by email) = **36**.

Chinese experts interviewed by email only = **3**.

Japanese experts interviewed (directly or by email) = **44**.

Japanese experts interviewed by email only = **3**.

Third parties interviewed = **6**.

Third party interviewed by email only = **1**.

Total number of interviews = **88**. (2 experts were interviewed twice (in 2007 and 2008)).

Total number of different people interviewed = **86**.

Total number of interviews as indicated by the following list = **83**. One interview was a group interview (discussion format) which included six people; this was marked as one interview. Therefore, with six people designated as one interview, then five from the total number of interviews carried out was excluded.

**Interview No. 1:** Sean J Curtain, Japan Scholar. Lecturer, School of Oriental and Asian Studies (SOAS) and the University of Westminster on 20/08/2006.

**Interview No. 2:** Sam Jameson, journalist, Visiting Fellow, Institute for International Policy Studies, Yomiuri Research Institute, former Tokyo Bureau Chief, Chicago Tribune (1963-1971), former Tokyo Bureau Chief, Los Angeles Times (1971-1996), on 26/08/2006.

**Interview No. 3:** Tsuyoshi Ike, Manager, Information Analysis and Research Department, International Affairs Group. Sumitomo Shoji Research Institute, Inc. on 28/08/2006.

**Interview No. 4:** Tsutomu Toichi, Senior Managing Director and COO, Chief Executive Researcher, The Institute of Energy Economics (IEEJ) Tokyo, on 29/08/2006.

**Interview No. 5:** Sumihiko Kawamura, Rear Admiral Japan Maritime Self-Defense Forces (JMSDF) Retired, Deputy Director, Okazaki Institute on 29/08/2006.

**Interview No. 6:** Robert Dujarric, Visiting Research Fellow, The Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA) on 31/08/2006.

**Interview No. 7:** Aaron Sheldrick, Reporter, Bloomberg (Tokyo Office) on 06/09/2006.

**Interview No. 8:** Masahiro Miyoshi, Professor of International Law, Director, the Institute of International Affairs, Aichi University, General Editor, The Asian Yearbook of International Law on 08/09/2006.

**Interview No. 9:** Kenji Sasaki, Deputy General Manager, Policy Research Committee, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) on 13/09/2006.

**Interview No. 10:** Hisane Masaki, Journalist, Commentator, and Scholar on International Politics and Economy, on 16/09/2006.

**Interview No.11:** Wataru Hiraizumi, President of the Kajima Institute of International Peace, former state minister, and senior advisor to the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA), on 14/09/2007.

**Interview No. 12:** Kazumine Akimoto, Rear Admiral, JMSDF Retired, and Senior Research Fellow, Policy Research Department, Ocean Policy Research Foundation (OPRF), Tokyo on 21/09/2007.

**Interview No. 13:** (Anonymous) Legal expert at the School of Law, Waseda University, Tokyo on 26/09/2007.

**Interview No. 14:** Noboru Hatakeyama, Chairman and CEO, Japan Economic Foundation, on 27/09/2007.

**Interview No. 15:** Yasuji Ishigaki, Professor, Tokai University Law School, Special Assistant to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Former Japanese ambassador to Finland, Delegate for Japan to AALCO: Asian and African Legal Consultative Organization, on 03/10/2007.

**Interview No. 16:** Jiro Yamaguchi, Professor of Political Science, Faculty of Law, Hokkaido University, on 06/10/2007.

**Interview No. 17:** (First of Two Interviews) Akio Takahara, Professor, Graduate School of Law and Politics, the University of Tokyo, on 12/10/2007.

**Interview No. 18:** Yukio Satoh, President, The Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA), on 16/10/2007.

**Interview No. 19:** Sogo Ikeda, Professor, Dean, Graduate School of Political Science, Kokushikan University on 17/10/2007.

**Interview No. 20:** Makoto Iokibe, Professor, President of the National Defense Academy, Japan on 23/10/2007.

**Interview No. 21:** Chiyuki Mizukami, Professor, Faculty of Law, Meiji Gakuin University, on 24/10/2007.

**Interview No. 22:** Shigeki Sakamoto, Professor of International Law, Graduate School of Law, Kobe University, on 27/10/2007.

**Interview No. 23:** Toshiyuki Shikata, Professor of Law, Teikyo University, Counselor to the Governor of Tokyo, former Lieutenant General of the JSDF, on 05/11/2007.

**Interview No.24:** Jin Xide, Deputy Director, Institute of Japanese Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) on 20/11/2007.

**Interview No.25:** (Via interpreter) Zhu Fenglan, scholar, Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, Center for Regional Security Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) on 21/11/2007.

**Interview No.26:** (Via interpreter) Xia Yishan, Senior Research Fellow, Director, Center for Energy Strategy Studies, China Institute of International Studies (CIIS) on 23/11/2007.

**Interview No.27:** (Conducted in Japanese) Chongyang Xin, Associate Professor of Law, Associate Dean, School of Juris Master in China University of Political Science and Law on 27/11/2007.

**Interview No.28:** Zhang Xinjun, Lecturer in International Law, School of Law, Tsinghua University, Beijing, on 30/11/2007.

**Interview No.29:** Pan Rui, Professor, Center for American Studies, Fudan University, Shanghai on 04/12/2007.

**Interview No.30:** (First Interview of Two) Cai Penghong, Senior Fellow and Professor, Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, Shanghai Academy of Social Studies (SASS) on 04/12/2007.

**Interview No.31:** Shu Biquan, SASS scholar, Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences on 04/12/2007.

**Interview No.32:** (Via Interpreter) Jin Yongming, Associate Research Fellow, Institute of Law, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, on 04/12/2007.

**Interview No.33:** Xu Xiaobing, Professor, Lecturer of Law, Shanghai Jiaotong University on 04/12/2007.

**Interview No.34:** Ji Guoxing, Professor, Center of RimPac Studies, School of International and Public Affairs, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, on 05/12/2007.

**Interview No.35:** Ni Shixiong, Professor, School of International Relations and Public Affairs, Fudan University, Member, Committee of Social Sciences, Ministry of Education, on 06/12/2007.

**Interview No.36:** Hideaki Kaneda, retired Vice-Admiral (JMSDF), Director, Special Advisor, The Okazaki Institute, Tokyo on 13/12/2007.

**Interview No.37:** Gao Lan, Associate Professor, Institute of Asian-Pacific Studies, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS), Research Fellow, Japan Studies Center of Fudan University on 02/09/2008.

**Interview No.38:** Li Xiushi, Professor, Director of Japanese Studies, Shanghai Institute for International Studies (SIIS), on 03/09/2008.

**Interview No.39:** Xue Chen, Research Fellow, Department of Strategic Studies, Shanghai Institute for International Studies, on 03/09/2008.

**Interview No.40:** Su Changhe, Dean and Professor, School of International and Diplomatic Affairs (SIDA), Shanghai International Studies University on 03/09/2008.

**Interview No.41:** (Second of Two Interviews) Cai Penghong, Senior Fellow and Professor, Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, Shanghai Academy of Social Studies (SASS) on 05/09/2008.

**Interview No.42:** Guo Dingping, Professor of Political Science, School of International Relations and Public Affairs, Fudan University on 05/09/2008.

**Interview No.43:** Ding Li Shen, Professor of International Studies; Executive Dean, Institute of International Studies, Director, Center for American Studies, Fudan University, on 10/09/2008.

**Interview No.44:** Wang Hanling, Professor, Director, Research Base for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (BOALOS), Center for International Law and the National Institute of Law, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) on 16/09/2008.

**Interview No.45:** (Via interpreter) Liu Nanlai, Professor, Center for International Law and the National Institute of Law, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) on 16/09/2008.

**Interview No.46:** Su Hao, Professor, Director, Center for Asia-Pacific Studies, Deputy Director, Center for International Security, China Foreign Affairs University (CFAU) on 17/09/2008.

**Interview No.47:** Sun Xuefeng, Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, Tsinghua University, on 17/09/2008.

**Interview No.48:** Chris Buckley, Senior Correspondent, Reuters, on 18/09/2008.

**Interview No.49:** (Via interpreter) Zheng Donghui, researcher, China Institute of International Studies (CIIS) on 18/09/2008.

**Interview No.50:** Cheng Xiaohe, Professor, School of International Studies, Renmin University of China, on 19/09/2008.

**Interview No.51:** Zhu Feng, Deputy Director, Professor, School of International Studies, Center for International and Strategic Studies, Peking University on 22/09/2008.

**Interview No.52:** Yu Tienjun, General Secretary, Associate Professor, School of International Studies (SIS), Center for International and Strategic Studies, Peking University on 22/09/2008.

**Interview No.53:** (Anonymous) A group of six scholars from the State Oceanic Administration (SOA), China Institute for Marine Affairs (CIMA), Beijing, on 23/09/2008.

**Interview No.54:** Yang Bojiang, Professor, Director, Institute of Japanese Studies, China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), on 24/09/2008.

**Interview No.55:** Masakazu Toyoda, Secretary-General, Secretariat of Headquarters for Space Policy, Cabinet Secretariat, Special Adviser for Global Environmental Affairs. Ministry for Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) on 09/10/2008.

**Interview No.56:** Tomohide Murai, Director of Library, Professor of International Relations, National Defense Academy, on 10/10/2008.

**Interview No.57:** Tadashi Anno, Associate Professor of Political Science, Sophia University, on 14/10/2008.

**Interview No.58:** Keiichi Tsunekawa, Vice-President, Director, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Research Institute, on 15/10/2008.

**Interview No.59:** Eiichi Shindo, Professor Emeritus, University of Tsukuba, Adjunct Professor, Waseda University, on 21/10/2008.

**Interview No.60:** Takashi Shiraishi, Vice President and Professor, National Graduate Institute of Policy Studies (GRIPS) on 22/10/2008.

**Interview No.61:** Yoshi Nakai, Professor, Department of Political Studies, Gakushuin University on 23/10/2008.

**Interview No.62:** Tsuneo Watanabe, Senior Fellow, The Tokyo Foundation on 27/10/2008.

**Interview No.63:** Yoji Koda, Retired JMSDF Vice Admiral, on 27/10/2008.

**Interview No.64:** Tetsuo Kotani, Research Fellow, Policy Research Department, Ocean Policy Research Foundation (OPRF), Japan on 28/10/2008.

**Interview No.65:** Ryosei Kokubun, Dean and Professor, Faculty of Law and Politics, Keio University, Tokyo on 29/10/2008.

**Interview No.66:** (Second of Two Interviews) Akio Takahara, Professor, Graduate School of Law and Politics, the University of Tokyo, on 04/11/2008.

**Interview No.67:** Hisahiko Okazaki, Director, The Okazaki Institute, Tokyo, on 04/11/2008.

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**Interview No.69:** Masahiro Sakamoto, Vice President, Japan Forum for Strategic Studies, on 06/11/2008.

**Interview No.70:** Hiroshi Nakanishi, Professor (International Politics), School of Government, Kyoto University on 11/11/2008.

**Interview No.71:** (Along with emailed notes) Aki Mori, scholar and doctoral candidate, Doshisha University, Kyoto, on 12/11/2008.

**Interview No. 72:** Koji Murata, Professor, International Security Studies, Department of Political Science, Doshisha University on 12/11/2008.

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**Interview No.75:** (Comments sent by email) Ryo Ota Asano, Professor, Faculty of Law, Department of Political Science, Doshisha University, Kyoto, on 03/12/2008.

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**Interview No.78:** (Comments sent by email) Jian Yang, Senior Lecturer, Department of Political Studies, University of Auckland, New Zealand, on 11/01/2009.

**Interview No.79:** (Comments sent by email) Jing-Dong Yuan, Associate Professor of International Policy Studies, Graduate School of International Policy Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies, California, USA on 15/01/2009.

**Interview No.80:** (Translated comments sent by email) Kimio Yakushiji, Professor, College of Asia-Pacific Studies, and Vice-President of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Japan on 22/01/2009.

**Interview No.81:** (Comments sent by email) Kyoko Hamakawa, Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, Research and Legislative Reference Bureau, The National Diet Library, Japan on 23/01/2009.

**Interview No.82:** (Comments sent by email) Li Mingjiang, Assistant Professor, China Programme, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, A Graduate School of Nanyang Technological University, Singapore on 03/02/2009.

**Interview No.83:** (Comments sent by email) Frank Ching, journalist and writer, on 03/02/2009.

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