

# WHY HAS THE DIAOYU/SENKAKU DISPUTE BEEN INTENSIFIED AND WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RESOLUTIONS?

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*The Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute is a territorial conflict between China and Japan, and there have been ups and downs over several decades. As China's assertiveness has been increased from the late 2000s, much attention has been paid to the relationship between China and Japan. The issue is related with each state's strategic, economic and symbolic interests, which makes the nature of the dispute complex. In this paper, it is argued that the growing tension between China and Japan is largely influenced by the changing international structure due to the rise of China, and the issue is reinforced by domestic politics as the politicians could utilize the issue as a political tool to gain public support based upon strong nationalism in China and Japan. There are three options available to resolve the conflict: military confrontation, the US intervention, and the international legal institution. These options will be critiqued with a meaningful analysis, and the paper suggests that a long-term resolution should be adopted by emphasizing the importance of public education and cooperative measures to develop the area for both states' benefits after recovering mutual trust.*

## **Introduction**

The Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute is a territorial conflict between China and Japan over a group of islands in the East China Sea, and it has strained the Sino-Japanese relationship for several decades. The nature of the issue is greatly complex due to the combination of each state's strategic, economic and symbolic interests. Historically, the dispute originated from the period of imperial Japan in 1885 when Japan occupied the Islands in pursuit of its empire in the region. After WWII, from Japan's perspective, under the San Francisco Treaty in 1952 the Senkaku Islands belonged to the US as part of the Nansei

Shoto Islands (Okinawa); however, from China's side, the Islands were returned with Taiwan at the time. Thus, the turning point was 1971 when Okinawa was returned from the US to Japan. Since then, the tensions have grown between the two states, and there is a pattern that one of the states challenges the other especially when there is a physical clash, and the dispute periodically escalates and de-escalates. Nonetheless, the point where the states lose control over the dispute has not been reached.

The conflict has shown ups and downs, but the level of intensity has been growing from the late 2000s. To account for this intensified tension, there are various approaches to the conflict in international relations. Realism pays attention to the power dynamics between China and Japan, and constructivism emphasizes the importance of the historical legacies and symbolic meaning of acquiring the islands as strong nationalism is present in Northeast Asia. Though liberalists could not specifically account for the increasing tension over the region in recent years, they contend that military confrontations are unlikely due to increasing economic interdependence. Among numerous factors, I argue that the growing tension between China and Japan is largely influenced by the changing international structure due to the rise of China and it is reinforced by domestic politics as the politicians could utilize the issue as a political tool to gain public support based upon strong nationalism in China and Japan.

To support my argument, first, I present the literature review and the background of the issue. Second, to assess China's increasing aggressiveness, I analyze its behavior during the 2000s considering three aspects: military capabilities, diplomatic stance and administrative activities. In particular, I pay attention to the 2010 incident to present the case of China's assertive attitude. Third, I study the international structure of Northeast Asia to find the main cause of the intensification of the conflict, and I point out that China as a revisionist challenges the status quo which has been supported by Japan. As China's interests are expanding, its approach is expressed through increasing military capabilities and aggressive diplomatic stance. In response, Japan strongly resists against such attempt to secure the status quo.

Next, I examine several options for possible resolutions: military confrontation, the US intervention, and the international legal institution. After I critique these options, in conclusion I claim that a long-term resolution should be adopted by emphasizing the importance of public education and cooperative measures to develop the area for both states' benefits. Both states should recover mutual trust first, and the people need to recognize the possible benefits of a close and friendly relationship. Hence, the government and politicians would be constrained from intensifying the issue for political purposes.

## Background of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands Dispute

Understanding the historical background of the dispute is critical because both countries' claims are based on both historical and legal accounts. Since there is no consensus on the origin of the ownership, each state assertively insists on its own claim. The origin of the dispute dates back to the late nineteenth century when Japan exerted its imperial power in the region. According to Japan, with the conduct of ten years of survey it established its sovereignty over the islands after determining that the islands are uninhabited.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, China argues that from ancient times the islands were under China's ownership, and have been under Taiwan's provincial administration. The Chinese argue that the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands were subject to Japanese rule after China's defeat in the first Sino-Japanese war, given that China ceded Taiwan to Japan under the Treaty of Shimonoseki.<sup>2</sup>

After WWII, Japan signed the San Francisco Treaty in 1952, and according to the Chinese government, the Islands were returned with Taiwan to China. Nevertheless, Japan asserts that the islands were not included in the territory that Japan renounced under Article II of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, which legally defined Japan's postwar territory. Under the treaty, the Senkaku Islands were placed under US administration as part of Okinawa (in accordance with Article III).<sup>3</sup>

The turning point of the dispute was 1971 when Japan obtained its ownership over Okinawa in accordance with the Agreement between Japan and the United States concerning the Ryukyu Islands and the Daito Islands signed on 17 June 1971. Japan viewed that the Islands were part of the Ryukyu Islands so that from Japan's perspective, it regained its jurisdiction over the Islands from the US. Since the reversion of Okinawa to Japanese rule in 1972, the Japanese government has constantly sent its naval forces, called Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF), to eject Chinese fishermen from this area. Moreover, in 1972, Japan challenged Taiwan government's planning for oil development, which caused massive Taiwanese protests.

Nevertheless, the dispute between Taiwan and Japan turned into a conflict between mainland China and Japan due to the normalization of the two states

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1 "Fact Sheet on the Senkaku Islands," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*, November 2012, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/senkaku/fact\\_sheet.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/senkaku/fact_sheet.html) (accessed May 20, 2013).

2 "China Makes Solemn Representations to Japan over the issue of the Diaoyu Islands," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*, February 11, 2009, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjfb/zjzg/yzs/xwlb/t536836.shtml> (accessed May 15, 2013).

3 "Fact Sheet on the Senkaku Islands."

in 1972, and Japan began to derecognize Taiwan. Later in October 1978, while China and Japan were about to reach a formal treaty, the Treaty of Peace and Friendship, the islands dispute again emerged to disturb the bilateral relationship. In Japan, a group of politicians from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) contended to ensure the islands dispute with China from reaching the agreement by raising the issue in the Diet. The Chinese in response furiously protested against the Japanese account, and a flotilla of fishing boats from China reached the islands. However, Deng Xiaoping, then Vice Premier, proclaimed that both governments had agreed to shelve the issue in 1972 and suggested to postpone resolving the issue:

“It is true that the two sides maintain different views on this question.... It does not matter if this question is shelved for some time, say, ten years. Our generation is not wise enough to find common language on this question. Our next generation will certainly be wiser. They will certainly find a solution acceptable to all.”<sup>4</sup>

Since then, the conflict has had ups and downs and sometimes constrained the diplomatic relations between China and Japan. During the 1990s, more conflicts occurred between the two states. For example, in 1992, China asserted its claim by passing the Law on the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone, which explicitly specifies the “Diaoyu Islands” as China’s territory, whereas the Japanese in June 1996 declared an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) around the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands (taking effect on July 20, 1996). Further, physical clashes between the Japanese and Chinese ships were increasing, but both states did not devise suitable means to solve the issue.

In the 2000s, the frequency of escalations has increased and especially so in the late 2000s. In January 2004, there was a clash between two Chinese fishing vessels and patrol boats of the Japanese MSDF.<sup>5</sup> In March 2004, for the first time seven activists from mainland China landed on the islands and were subsequently arrested by Japanese security forces. Such conduct led Japan to officially protest against China, but China expressed both concern and criticism over the arrests. In April 2004, a member of a Japanese right-wing group rammed a bus into the Chinese consulate in Osaka in western Japan to protest

4 Deng Xiaoping, quoted in Chi-kin Lo, *China’s Policy toward Territorial Disputes: The Case of the South China Sea Islands* (London: Routledge, 1989), 171-72.

5 “Japanese warships attack Chinese fishing boats off Diaoyu Island,” *Xinhua News Agency*, January 14, 2004, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2004-01/15/content\\_1278205.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2004-01/15/content_1278205.htm) (accessed May 22, 2013).

China's claims, which caused further massive protests by the Chinese government and people. Furthermore, in February 2005, Japan announced that it had placed under state control and protection a lighthouse erected on the largest of the Senkaku Islands by Japanese right-wing activists in 1988. In July 2004, both China and Japan had a conflict regarding exploring resources. Japan explored in its self-alleged EEZ to counter China's gas construction, but China disputed against Japan's action as both countries had not agreed upon the delimitation of the area. As shown, the disputes in the 2000s were largely due to both states' disagreement on each state's way to consolidate one's territorial claim. In the late 2000s, however, China's aggressiveness was much more apparent, which will be dealt with in the following section.

### Literature Review

The Senkaku conflict has been explained with diverse approaches in the field of international relations. First, according to the realist view, in Northeast Asia, the power structure cannot be addressed without the US as a hegemonic power. Realists have paid close attention to the role of the US in the region and the alliance between Japan and the US. Though the US holds a neutral stance on the issue, it is still important to view the issue in consideration of the US factor. Scholars point out that the US presence and its strong alliance with Japan in the region has kept Japan from direct confrontation with China.<sup>6</sup> However, since the rise of China was actively discussed due to China's economic growth and increasing military capabilities, the uncertainties about the issue were essential. Thus, from a realist's view, the islands dispute can be explained with a view to the changing power structure, and it is the competition between China and Japan over the islands.

Second, liberals emphasize the regime type, economic interdependence, and international organizations. To analyze the dispute, liberals pay attention to economic relations between Japan and China and anticipate that both countries would not ignore the benefits from bilateral relations to acquire the islands by showing the increasing amount of bilateral trade, investment, and finance.<sup>7</sup> They

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6 See: Jean-Marc F. Blanchard, "The US Role in the Sino-Japanese Dispute over the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands 1945-1941," *China Quarterly* 161, (2000): 95-123; Kimie Hara, "50 years from San Francisco: re-examining the peace treaty and Japan's territorial problems," *Pacific Affairs* 74, no. 3 (2001): 361-82; J. Lind, "Pacifism or Passing the Buck? Testing theories of Japanese security policy," *International Security* 29, no.1 (2004), 92-121.

7 See: Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion: A Study of the Relation of Military Power in Nations to their Economic and Social Advantage* (New York: Putnam, 2010); Richard N. Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Trading State: Commerce and Conquest in the Modern World* (New York: Basic Books, 1986); Min Gyo Koo, "The Senkaku/Diaoyu Dispute and Sino-Japanese Political-Economic Relations: cold politics

argue that due to growing economic interdependence, both states would not risk military confrontation over the Islands. However, liberalism could not explain that the conflict has intensified despite increasing economic ties. According to liberalism, for both countries, it is more beneficial to cooperate in order to obtain economic gains through common research to exert possible resources under the Islands, but this seems unlikely between China and Japan.

Third, constructivists' explanation may be helpful to understand Northeast Asian international relations. The islands dispute is explained by both countries' historical and cultural backgrounds which are critical components to understand the relations between China and Japan. The constructivist viewpoint is especially valuable to explain the area which realists and liberals cannot explain. Since national identity and pride are strong in Northeast Asia, the massive protests are driven by historical legacies and nationalism. In addition, the dispute also can be explained with China's growing irredentist tendency combined with Japan's habit of glossing over its war past.<sup>8</sup> From this view, legal approaches are possible if they are changing the perspectives on the issue. Hence, this approach predicts that the dispute would likely continue and escalate, as long as both material and symbolic, as well as legal and historical, issues remain unresolved.<sup>9</sup>

Lastly, domestic politics explanation links the dispute and government leadership which utilizes the issue to mobilize political support. Scholars focusing on this approach study the timing and manner of actions of domestic actors.<sup>10</sup> It is assumed that politicians defend and enhance domestic legitimacy and public support for their regime or particular policy. This explanation is relatively compelling for this dispute because in both states, anti-Chinese and anti-Japanese sentiments are often utilized to mobilize public support.

### China's increasing assertiveness

To assess China's increasing aggressiveness, three aspects can be considered: China's diplomatic stance via official statements, China's increasing military capabilities, and China's ambition to engage in patrol activities around the islands. First, as noted above, there have been physical clashes between the two

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and hot economics?," *The Pacific Review* 22, no. 2 (2009): 205-232.

8 See: Unryu Suganuma, *Sovereign Rights and Territorial Space in Sino-Japanese Relations: Irredentism and the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000); Shogo Suzuki, "The importance of "othering" in China's national identity: Sino-Japanese relations as a stage of identity conflicts," *The Pacific Review* 20, no. 1 (2007): 23-47.

9 Koo, "The Senkaku/Diaoyu Dispute and Sino-Japanese Political-Economic Relations."

10 See: C. Chung, *Domestic Politics, International Bargaining and China's Territorial Disputes* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

states since the 1970s. What is significant in this section is how China's diplomatic stance on the incidents has changed over time. In January 2004, there was a physical clash in the sea, and the Chinese government issued a press release stating that Japanese warships had attacked Chinese fishing boats. Though China expressed its sovereignty and ownership over the islands, it did not make further comments to protest against Japan for such action. China did not constrain other aspects of its diplomatic relationship with Japan due to this dispute.

In June 2008, both the Chinese and the Japanese governments announced that both sides had reached a principled consensus on the East China Sea dispute. The consensus contained several key elements: the two sides will conduct cooperation in the transitional period prior to delimitation without prejudicing their legal positions; both sides jointly take the first step to conduct joint development on the northern part of the East China Sea. After this announcement, Chinese vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei stated that progress on relations between China and Japan since 2007 had created the necessary conditions for the two nations to reach consensus and understanding on the East China Sea dispute. In addition, he stated: "some sensitive issues can be easily resolved as bilateral relations improve, and I believe if we can make a breakthrough on the East China Sea issue, we will also be able to address other complex and sensitive issues between the two nations."<sup>11</sup>

These statements and attitudes from the Chinese government present its willingness to resolve the issue diplomatically and to seek cooperation between the two states. However, the incident in 2010 shows China's increasing diplomatic assertiveness. Unlike prior years, China had applied other measures to link with the territorial issue and to constrain the relationship with Japan. China postponed a scheduled Japan-China parliamentary Exchange (September 13, 2010) and used trade as a strategic means to threaten Japan. China stated that "China has warned Japan that their wider relationship will suffer if Tokyo mishandles a dispute about a Chinese fishing boat seized in disputed waters." It specifically warned that the territorial issue can be extended to other diplomatic relations with Japan.<sup>12</sup> Lastly, China postponed a visit of 1,000 Japanese youths to the Expo 2010 in Shanghai (September 19, 2010).<sup>13</sup> Before this inci-

11 "Chinese Vice FM: Progress on Sino-Japanese relations creates conditions to resolve East China Sea issue," June 19, 2008, [http://www.china.org.cn/international/foreign\\_ministry/2008-06/20/content\\_15861719.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/international/foreign_ministry/2008-06/20/content_15861719.htm) (accessed June 1, 2013).

12 "Japan-China boat spat escalates," *BBC News*, September 9, 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-11241445> (accessed May 30, 2013).

13 "Recent Developments in Japan-China Relations," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*, October 2010, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/china/pdfs/facts1010.pdf> (accessed May 29, 2013).

dent, China had shown its willingness to seek cooperation, but this incident has demonstrated China's assertive attitude to secure its interests at the expense of further constrained relations with Japan.

Second, China has shown its increasing military capabilities in the region. Its naval modernization has concerned not only neighboring countries but also the US. China's military modernization includes a so-called anti access force—a force that “can deter US intervention in a conflict involving Taiwan, or failing that, delay the arrival or reduce the effectiveness of intervening US naval and air forces.”<sup>14</sup> In recent years, observers have argued that not only Taiwan but China's naval modernization effort is increasingly related with pursuing additional goals such as: asserting or defending China's territorial claims in the South China Sea and East China Sea; enforcing China's view—a minority but growing view among world nations—that it has the right to regulate foreign military activities in its 200-mile maritime EEZ; protecting China's sea lines of communications; protecting and evacuating Chinese nationals in foreign countries; displacing US influence in the Pacific; and asserting China's status as a major world power.<sup>15</sup>

It is argued that China's military modernization started in the 1990s by acquiring a broad array of weapon acquisition programs, including anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBMs), submarines, and surface ships. China's naval modernization effort also includes reforms and improvements in maintenance and logistics, naval doctrine, personnel quality, education, training, and exercises.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, it is China's internal balancing which ensures security through increasing its military capabilities in case of a direct military confrontation with Japan. This does not mean that China and Japan would adopt a military measure. However, based upon a defensive strategy China prepares militarily for a worst case scenario.

Third, along with the increasing military capabilities, China has expanded its role in surveillance and patrol activities by challenging the administrative status quo in the East China Sea through sending vessels to the area. Since the mid-2000s, there have been efforts to emphasize maritime security in China. For example, in August 2004, the national work meeting on construction of border and coastal defense infrastructure was held in Beijing.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore,

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14 Ronald O'Rourke, “China Naval Modernization: Implications for US Navy Capabilities—Background and Issues for Congress,” *Congressional Research Service*, April 26, 2013, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33153.pdf>.

15 *Ibid.*, 2.

16 *Ibid.*

17 *Ibid.*, 33.



in December 2008, for the first time Chinese Government vessels intruded into Japan's territorial waters surrounding the Senkaku Islands, which reportedly raised concern among the Japanese public. The Japanese government claimed that these actions contributed to public support for a plan to purchase the Senkaku Islands by the former Tokyo Governor, Shintaro Ishihara.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, although lightly armed or unarmed, Chinese maritime vessels are often coupled with People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) capabilities over the horizon. By using "non-military" vessels to engage in military coercion, China is increasing the likelihood of escalation as well as the speed with which it could occur. At the same time, the increased activity and assertiveness of Chinese maritime vessels are ultimately provoking military responses from regional powers to repel and deter Chinese incursions—which contradicts Chinese arguments that these forces serve to keep military forces at bay.<sup>19</sup>

### Incident in 2010

Physical clashes between Japan and China around the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands are not rare, but what is striking about the incident in 2010 is China's aggressiveness and strong determination to display its interests related to the Islands. On September 7, 2010, there were collisions between two Japanese patrol boats and a Chinese trawler. According to the Japanese Coast Guard spokesman, the Chinese vessel had collided with two Japanese patrol boats in two separate incidents. Despite repeated warnings from the Japanese guards, the Chinese ship remained in the area so that the Chinese captain of the fishing boat finally was arrested by the Japanese authority. In response, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman repeated China's claim on the Diaoyu islands and urged Japanese patrol boats in the area against conducting any "so-called law enforcement activities or any actions that would jeopardize Chinese fishing boats or Chinese people."<sup>20</sup>

Further, China warned Japan that their wider relationship will suffer if Tokyo mishandles a dispute about the Chinese fishing boat seized in disputed waters. China's foreign ministry said it was "absurd and illegal" for Japan to apply do-

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18 "Recent Developments in Japan-China Relations."

19 "The Challenge of Chinese Revisionism: The Expanding Role of China's Non-Military Maritime Vessels," *Center for New American Security*, February 1, 2013, [http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/CNAS\\_Bulletin\\_HosfordRatner\\_ChineseRevisionism.pdf](http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/CNAS_Bulletin_HosfordRatner_ChineseRevisionism.pdf).

20 "Boat Collisions Spark Japan-China Diplomatic Row," *BBC News*, September 8, 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-11225522> (accessed May 23, 2013).

mestic law in “China’s territory.”<sup>21</sup> China expressed its concern and complained against Japan not only through official statements but also exerted its influence over other areas affecting the bilateral relationship. China canceled officials’ visit to Japan and blocked exports to Japan of a crucial category of minerals used in products like hybrid cars, wind turbines and guided missiles—so-called rare earth elements. A spokesman for the Chinese commerce ministry declined to discuss the country’s trade policy on rare earths, and China denied Japan’s complaints that China related the diplomatic conflict to trade.<sup>22</sup> At the moment, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao personally called for Japan’s release of the captain, and Mr. Wen threatened unspecified further actions if Japan did not comply.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Intensity of the Conflict and China’s Increasing Assertiveness**

The 2010 incident in particular presents that China has expressed its strong interests in the Islands with an increasingly assertive attitude. It is not surprising to see that China claims its ownership over the Islands; however, the growing diplomatic, political and even military tension is remarkable in the late 2000s. This paper attributes these factors of the escalation of to the rising China and its expanded core interests as it challenges the administrative status quo preferred by Japan with its effective control of the region. Further, it argues that domestic politics in both states reinforce the intensity of the conflict as the politicians could utilize the issue as a political tool to gain public support based upon strong nationalism in China and Japan.

From the literature review, there are several factors to account for within the conflict. To grasp the increasing intensity of the conflict, the realist perspective is relevant because the rise of China has been changing the structure of the international order in Northeast Asia. Because of the presence of the US, direct confrontations between China and Japan over the Islands have been constrained; however, the rise of China has brought uncertainties to the international structure of Northeast Asia, and this power dynamics is shown in the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes. Though China has been interested in the region for strategic purposes for long, it is more likely that its increasing military and economic capabilities in recent years have supported China’s decision to challenge Japan.

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21 “Japan-China Boat Spat Escalates.”

22 Keith Bradsher, “Amid Tension, China Blocks Crucial Exports to Japan,” *New York Times*, September 23, 2010, [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/24/business/global/24rare.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/24/business/global/24rare.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) (accessed May 23, 2013).

23 Ibid.

In addition, defensive realism is helpful to explain both states' behavior. Unlike offensive realism which emphasizes a state's power maximization,<sup>24</sup> defensive realists hold that states are largely concerned with their own survival and security, which could include seeking power. Accordingly, Stephen Walt argues that a state will assess how threatening a potential adversary is based on a combination of factors including geography and intentions as well as capabilities.<sup>25</sup> Thus, compared to offensive realism, a state's behavior is largely determined by its interpretation of the other state's intention. When a state views the other state's intention as malign, it would behave in a manner consistent with offensive realism. If intentions are viewed as benign, then a state is likely to respond defensively by maintaining a balance of power and even adopting a defensive military posture and eschewing offensive military capabilities. If mutual perceptions of intentions are benign, then security cooperation rather than competition becomes possible.

Regarding the Diaoyu/Senkaku conflict, offensive realism may not be easily applicable because the conflict is not simply the result of China's and Japan's power maximization in the region. Instead, a careful analysis of both states' intention and security concern in the changing international structure is needed. From the Chinese side, as it is rising in the region, it implies that China's interests are expanding in both economic and militarily aspects. Concerned with securing its interests, China aims for increased control over Northeast Asia where the US is the hegemony and Japan has maintained a strong alliance with the US. While the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands are included in China's interests due to its strategic and economic incentives, in China's view on Japan considering its capabilities and intention, consensus would unlikely be obtained. Hence, this increasing intensity of the territorial conflict reflects rising China's challenge against the status quo maintained by Japan in competition for power in the region. Further, though China is regarded as an initiator in this conflict, it is critical to note that Japan strongly resists against China's challenge. Among four options, balancing, buck-passing, accommodation, and appeasement, Japan chooses to balance against China's influence to maintain its status quo.

In addition, both states' domestic politics is related with this territorial dispute. For the Chinese government, with rapid economic growth and mounting middle class, the expectations from the public are increasing. According to democracy theorists, the public requires more from the government for the better

24 See: John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001); Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979).

25 See: Stephen Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories," *Foreign Policy* 110 (Spring 1998): 29-45.

life which includes more political and civil rights, and it is more likely that people are dissatisfied with the authoritarian government. To maintain social stability, relieve discontent against the government, obtain public support, and ensure the CCP's legitimacy, Beijing often utilizes nationalism. In Japan, the rightist politicians in the LDP also encourage the nationalist substance and anti-Chinese sentiment to mobilize public support for its political purposes. This tendency in both states reinforces the intensity of the conflict. Due to the adverse historical legacies between China and Japan, it is useful for both countries to mobilize public support for its regime or a particular policy. Thus, the rise of China and strong nationalism in Northeast Asia contribute to the recent intensification of the territorial conflict over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands.

### **Possible Resolutions**

In this section, I assess possible options for the resolution for the Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute. The resolutions are analyzed based upon the causes of the incident pointed out in the previous section. I view each government as a main actor in this issue. Though the public opinion is critical for the escalation of the conflict, I assume that the public opinion is dependent upon the state's reaction and decision to politicize the issue. For example, if both governments keep low diplomacy over the incident, it is not reported in the media through which people are mainly exposed to the incidents. Considering the significant role of the states in the dispute, possible options for resolving the international conflicts are evaluated. According to this analysis, there are three options: military confrontation, third state's intervention, and resolution through legal means.

First, the military option is available for China and Japan to solve the dispute. A military confrontation means that the two countries go to war to acquire each state's national interest over the islands. However, considering economic interdependence and the US presence, solution through military means is unlikely. Both countries are heavily interdependent as a rapid increase in trade, investment and finance indicates. Thus, despite negative mutual sentiments, it is too costly for both states to adopt a military option. Further, China requires both internal and external stability for its economic growth, which is a critical task for the government to preserve its regime. From the Japanese perspective, the US would not approve Japan's involvement in a war over the Islands. The US has kept its neutral stance, and called for cooperation in the region to create a more peaceful environment. In addition, the extremely low possibility of adopting a military option is shown in the pattern of the territorial conflicts. Both states never reached the point where they could not control the issue any

more. Of course, there have been escalations, and there have been efforts to strengthen military capabilities especially by China. However, a direct military confrontation between China and Japan is not plausible.

Second, a US intervention could be possible for resolving the issue since both states insist on their respective claims. As the US is the dominant power in the region, it is possible that the US could promote peaceful resolution for the territorial dispute. Nonetheless, there are several factors making the US intervention unlikely for the possible resolution. First, the US has not shown its willingness to be involved in the conflict. Due to the US-Japan alliance, Japan could expect more support from the US; however, for regional peace and stability, the US would not take a side with Japan because it goes against the US role in the Pacific region. Second, China would strongly oppose the US engagement in the issue. China has called for no right to intervene in internal affairs and argued that the US has no ground to be involved in the dispute between China and Japan. Thus, any attempt by the US would be severely criticized by China. Lastly, the US has no strong substantial interests in the Islands so that it is unlikely that the US facilitates resolution of the issue but merely calls for both states' cooperation.

Third, this territorial issue could be resolved through legal means. Currently, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is present to deal with maritime disputes. It was adopted in 1982 and entered into force in 1994.<sup>26</sup> It defines maritime zones including a territorial sea, a continuous zone, an EEZ, and a continental shelf. When both states address their rights over the Islands, they often use the terms in the UNCLOS. However, the problem is that both states have not even reached consensus on the delimitation of the base lines. Each state prefers a different way. For example, China prefers equidistance line but Japan prefers equitable line to delimitate the area. Further, to file a case to the International Court of Justice, both states have to agree to transfer their rights to the court to make decisions; however, this is unlikely since Japan would not officially recognize this issue as a conflict because it currently effectively controls the region.

Thus, a long-term resolution should be considered for this dispute. The role of intellectuals, elites, and civil society is essential. Though this resolution seems slow and ideal, gradual efforts could change the public's attitude and eventually the government's foreign policy. Hence, public education is essential to raise public awareness of the seriousness of anti-Chinese/Japanese sentiments. Due

26 See: Min Gyo Koo, "Chapter 4: The Island and Maritime Disputes in the East Sea/Sea of Japan," *Island Disputes and Maritime Regime Building in East Asia* (New York: Springer, 2009).

to the protests, there have been excessive violent protests harming people and properties. There should be efforts to inform the politicians to be aware of the negative aspects of utilizing nationalism for gaining public support. It seems to work in a short term; however, utilizing nationalism could challenge the government if it could not satisfy the demand from the public. Then, when the atmosphere becomes peaceful by recovering mutual trusts, cooperative measures to develop the area around the islands are plausible.

## Conclusion

The Diaoyu/Senkaku issue has been critical for the Sino-Japanese relations as the political, diplomatic, and even economic relations have been constrained. In terms of mutual benefits, closer ties are desirable; however, both states strongly insist on their claims over the Islands. Historically, the issue itself is very complex, because both states' perspectives on the past differ from each other. Japan includes the Islands into Okinawa, but China regards the Islands as part of Taiwan.

There have been ups and downs in the dispute, but recently the intensity of the conflict is apparent due to the rise of China. I have showed China's increasing aggressiveness via three aspects: military modernization, an active involvement in patrolling activities, and diplomatic stance. China has increased its military capabilities and adopted a so-called anti-access forces strategy to secure its growing core interests. Diplomatically, as the 2010 incident presents, China has changed its attitude by threatening Japan. Chinese customs officials even halted shipments to Japan of rare earth elements. Further, starting from 2008, China has tried to actively participate in patrol activities in the area, which concerned not only Japan but also the US.

Hence, the growing tension between China and Japan is largely influenced by the changing international structure due to the rise of China and it is reinforced by domestic politics as the politicians could utilize the issue as a political tool to gain public support based upon strong nationalism in China and Japan. Considering this situation, I have analyzed the possible resolutions such as military confrontation, US intervention, and through legal means, and have pointed out each option's weakness. Thus, a long-term resolution is suggested to develop mutual trust between the two states through public education and cooperative development of the area. **Y**