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China's Maritime Ambitions in the First Island Chain and Beyond

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Previously, she has held appointments at the Cooperative Monitoring Center, Sandia National Laboratories (U.S.), Hokkaido University (Sapporo, Japan), and Fondation Maison des Sciences de l’Homme (Paris). Dr. Chansoria has contributed numerous peer-reviewed research papers and articles in various edited book volumes and academic journals. She is a regular participant in Track 1.5 & 2 diplomatic dialogues on international security issues and also contributes frequently in national and international dailies.

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The Challenges and Responses to Japan's Maritime Security*

Masashi Murano**

Abstract

The challenges of maritime security facing Japan are extremely complex. During peacetime and gray zone, the Japanese Coast Guard and the Self-Defense Force must conduct intermittent presence patrols to dynamically deter the adversary's opportunistic expansion. However, when considering seamless escalation from low-intensity aggression to high-intensity conflicts, the forward presence to address Chinese anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) threats needs to be deployed by distributed manner. These competing operational demands complicate how to combine the best mix of defense posture and portfolio direction. The assessment of Japan's decision to introduce F-35Bs and modifying the Izumo-class helicopter carrier is emblematic of this complexity. Their combination of high anti-ship attack capabilities can complicate the People's Liberation Army's fleet operations. At the same time, however, high-value assets such as light aircraft carriers carrying latest stealth fighters will also be a priority target for China, which may in turn impose costs on Japan. In recent years, China and Russia have also begun to conduct strategically coordinated operations, such as the joint patrol of Russian and Chinese bombers around Takeshima, a disputed territory between Japan and ROK. This behavior is seen as an attempt to probe the response of Japan and ROK and to further stimulate the deteriorating relations between the two countries. The U.S., Japan, and ROK need to work closely together on how to respond to these challenges.

Thank you very much for inviting me here. As some of you may know, the current Japan and China relationship is improving. For example, President Xi Jinping is scheduled to visit Japan as a state guest next year. However, looking at the East China Sea, the activities of the Chinese Coast Guard and People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy and PLA Air Force have become increasingly active rather than restrained. In other words, diplomatic relations between Japan and China have been irrelevant to China's behavior in the East China Sea.

So, what kind of activities especially is China doing in the East China Sea? I would like to at first talk about the low-intensity activities, which means these activities are not regularly undertaken by armed forces. They are often of closed focus on the Chinese Coast Guard and maritime police vessels.

The activities of the Chinese government vessels in the East China Sea, especially around the Senkaku Islands, have become more active and regular since Japan's decision to nationalize the

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Senkaku Islands in 2012. The Chinese Coast Guard vessels navigate the contiguous zone almost every day, when the weather is fine, and they enter into Japanese territorial waters three times a month on the average—in the security and intelligence community in Tokyo, they have informally called these activities “3-3-2 Method.”

This means that three Coast Guard vessels enter into the Japanese territorial water around the Senkaku Islands three times each month, remaining in the water for two hours. But, since September 2016, this method was upgraded to “3-4-2 Method.” In other words, the Chinese Coast Guard increased the number of vessels from three to four.

In my understanding, the long-term Chinese objective is to create change in the status quo and making it a fait accompli through their regular activities nearby the Senkaku and in the East China Sea.

So, why has the Chinese Coast Guard been able to increase the number of the vessels in the operation? This is because they are rapidly building the Coast Guard ships. For example, in 2012, the Chinese Coast Guard had just 40 vessels weighing more than 1,000 tons, but now—now meaning in 2019, this number has increased to 135.

At present, the average weight of the Chinese Coast Guard vessels operating in the East China Sea is 3,000 tons while that of Japan Coast Guard vessels is 1,500 tons. It is obvious that Japan Coast Guard is inferior to the Chinese Coast Guard, both in quality and quantity in the East China Sea.

In addition to the hardware, another important point is the software, which means the command and control. In July 2018, the Chinese Coast Guard was placed under the command of the Chinese People's Armed Police Forces, under the Central Military Commissions. The People's Armed Police is a paramilitary group, and the Chinese Coast Guard is expected to be more closely coordinated with the PLA than before. Japan has long sought to make the defense posture seamless, but it cannot be overlooked that China is making progress in updating its defense posture to be seamless and integrated.

Now, let's move on to the upgraded PLA forces and its characteristics. First, the intelligence-gathering vessels and aircrafts are operating in the area closer to the Senkaku Islands. Second, as the Pentagon annual reports pointed out, the over-water presence of the PLA Air Force bombers is increasing. In particular, they are conducting joint exercise with PLA Navy vessels, including aircraft carriers, more frequently, and most of these joint exercises go around Taiwan via Miyako Strait and Bashi Channel.

In my understanding, those kind of strategic collaborations and operations between China and Russia had been expected as a near term potential by Japan's security and intelligence community.

From that perspective, couple of months ago, I had an opportunity to participate in Japan, the U.S., and the Republic of Korea (ROK) trilateral track 1.5 and track 2 dialogue. At that time, I mentioned and made recommendation about the potential that Chinese or Russian air force fly over to Japan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ). In terms of the ADIZ in the East China Sea, a part of the area in Japan's ADIZ is overlapped with South Korean ADIZ, and China's ADIZ. So in that context, I recommended the ROK colleagues that Japan and South Korean air force should have more prior discussion on how to deal with such contingencies and what the rule of engagement would be like for our air forces if that occurs.

With some political struggle between the two countries, my perspective about the current Japan–South Korean relationship is not so optimistic, but I think that is one of the possible areas to cooperate with each other.

And third, the PLA operational area extended far beyond from the East China Sea. This includes not only Kyushu, Shikoku, and Honshu of Japan. The concern is that most bomber, like H-6Ks and Chinese surface ships and submarines bound for the Sea of Japan and the Pacific Islands, Pacific side, can carry long-range cruise missiles.

These activities are conducted in the peace time, and not necessarily in the wartime, but we need to be aware that not only ballistic missile attack from mainland China, but also saturation attack with the cruise missile from the mobile platforms of land, sea, and air, is becoming an emerging threat for Japan and the forward presence of the U. S.

So that is one of the major perspectives from the lower-intensity and the high-intensity operations.

In that context, I would like to add in some other challenges. In my initial remarks, I pointed out the low-intensity challenges and high-intensity challenges—I think it could be paraphrased as the combination of the gray zone challenges and A2/AD challenges. The problem is how to deal with such combination. When we face such kind of challenges, we have to consider the balance between maintaining presence through patrol in the peacetime and reducing the vulnerabilities in the wartime.

The issue of the gray zone has already been recognized in the security communities of Japan by 2010. As a result, the 2010 version of the National Defense Program Guideline already described the importance of the dynamic deterrence concept as one of the solutions for gray zone challenges.

In my understanding of this concept, it increased the number of the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) activities or the presence patrol by Japan's Coast Guard and Self Defense Forces in the area with concerns for gray zone challenges. It tried to prevent the making of physical windows of opportunities.

I think that the 2018 version—the latest version of the National Defense Program Guideline—basically followed the same directions. The problem is, however, that our resources are limited, so we need to prioritize the defense investment for the most effective means. In that context arise the challenges which I already mentioned—how do we deal with the combination of the gray zone challenges and A2/AD challenges.

So, why am I concerned especially about this area? It is because of the importance for Japan's Coast Guard vessels and Self Defense Forces to continue their activities in order to prevent the Chinese side from attempting to create a fait accompli or engaging in the probing activities.

I think that those kind of efforts as the refurbishment of the Izumo-class helicopter carriers, and the potential combinations with the F-35B, which have been decided to the latest National Defense Program Guideline, will enhance Japan's capabilities necessary for the presence patrols in the peacetime and during the gray zone situations.

However, given China's anti-access/area denial capabilities, it is extremely risky to deploy these high-value platforms forward, as some contingencies happen at once. In particular, Beijing has some incentive to use anti-ship cruise and ballistic missiles carried by variety of platforms early in the confrontation to counter Japan's advantages.

For instance, the stealth assets like F-35, are hard to detect and intercept in the air, and therefore, the detection and neutralization have much higher probability of success while these assets are on the ground or on ships. So, the forward presence in the peacetime and the reduction of its vulnerability, through some dispersal measures in the wartime, are very competing demand. It is extremely difficult to balance them. So that is one of my current major concerns about dealing with this combination.

Beijing's Reach in the South China Sea*

Collin Koh Swee Lean**

Abstract

This presentation posits that notwithstanding the phenomenal island-building and militarization efforts of China's outposts in the Spratly Islands, their future is far from absolutely certain given Chinese military planners' cognizance about their strategic and operational utility. That aside, however, there is much greater certainty about China's buildup of long-range kinetic weapons and offshore-capable mobile platforms and perhaps as significantly, noteworthy inroads made in Beijing's steady enhancement of its maritime domain awareness in the South China Sea, especially in the underwater realm. This aspect, which has in recent times gained more attention, would significantly expand China's military reach into the South China Sea, helping cement its physical control and domination of the area—especially when its Southeast Asian rivals contrast sharply with their shortfalls in both kinetic projection as well as maritime domain awareness capabilities. In view of these developments, the role of allies and partners becomes even more important from both military and non-military perspectives.

Thank you. I think Greg has more or less covered so much, and I don't really see how I could value add except probably touch on a few salient points and I think perhaps I will first answer the question about what exactly is the South China Sea to China, and whether we could shape China's behavior in the South China Sea. I will go back to my original argument, that instead of we trying to shape Chinese behavior, I think it is the other way around. Beijing wants to shape our behavior instead, in the South China Sea.

But first of all is perhaps to acknowledge that the South China Sea is basically what the Chinese will call "the blue territory." It carries, strategic, economic, emotional, as well as historical significance, and that gives rise to how China looks at the South China Sea on the whole. It is not just about protecting your sovereignty and your rights but also to create what I will call a strategic depth that can promote greater security for mainland China.

So it carries all these significance such that these are—cannot be viewed as interests to the other parties, but again, I would look at mostly the military aspects of the South China Sea—what China has been doing over the past few years. We look at largely the projection of military assets over the course of the past decade, and you'll find that, on the whole, the number of ships, say for example in the South Sea Fleet, and right now the Navy of the Southern Theater Command has generally been hovering around the same numbers.

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But even that, it is important to look at the qualitative improvements that the Chinese Navy and Air Force has achieved over the past three years. Numbers may have remained static, but the type of capabilities that have been infused into service has become increasingly more capable.

And we cannot forget also, in concurrence with the buildup of mobile assets, we are looking at the buildup in missile arsenal that can allow force projection further afield, even beyond the South China Sea.

And in the most recent years we have been seeing some very interesting developments when it comes to the People's Liberation Army (PLA) services trying to promote more jointness amongst themselves. For example, the Rocket Force coordinating with the Support Force and coordinating with the Navy in offshore training exercises, so that is of great significance.

And lastly the one other very important aspect would be the artificial islands that were being built so far. And suffice to say is minus a way to Scarborough Shoal, I think basically the construction has been done, and has been consolidated as well. And what we are seeing here in a next five to ten years will be the maintenance of these outposts and to beef up their capabilities.

Then I have some more nuanced argument towards that. There is news that talks about the deployment of electronic warfare systems, such as HQ-9s, surface-to-air missile systems, anti-ship missiles. What is suffice to say is that those are essentially mobile systems. Very often we imagine that you put those systems on the islands and they stay there forever, but if you look at the general Chinese military modernization, you'll find that there has been greater emphasis on essentially mobile and readily deployable systems. The fact that those artificial islands have airstrips and harbors could allow the rapid deployment of these systems and in converse, rapid withdrawal of these systems, allow the Chinese more flexibility in terms of areas like escalation control as well as signaling.

So what is actually more important is not so much about the weapon systems which were being put in place, but more because of the existing infrastructure that allows China the freedom of options to pursue. And that of course raises a question of what we mean by militarization. If you are talking about mobile systems that can be put into place and withdrawn anytime that you want, how do you find ways to tackle that particular aspect?

Say, for example, I always want to argue in the current context of the negotiation over the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea. And of course for the Chinese, I wanted to just raise some counterpoints to what most would see as the islands that could never go away down right—unsinkable aircraft carriers.

I would be more uncertain to that. I think what is suffice to say is PLA officials privately and publicly acknowledged that in a wartime situation these islands are practically close to useless. They will be taken out almost immediately on onset of any conflict in the South China Sea. But what we see here will be largely those islands being used for peacetime utility, for example, being used for blockading actions, some limited forms of offensive operations, but more likely defensive operations.

And the bigger question that I think the Chinese are facing right now is how to viably and sustainably operate those islands and ensure that they remain there. And currently, it is interesting to note that the Chinese do actually have some questions as to whether those artificial islands are geomorphologically stable in the longer term. Right now they are conducting studies, for example, looking at how coral and concrete can actually glue together properly so that they will not be washed away, or they will not be corroded over time, by the natural elements of the weather and the climate.

China is also studying the whole big question of military assets operating in essentially saline maritime environment. The one interesting thing is that the PLA acknowledges, and they are very proud to say, that they have reached a stage where they could reduce and mitigate corrosion for airframes, but they have also acknowledged that in terms of preventing or mitigating corrosion

on electronic systems, the situation is very separate.

We look at platforms not just in terms of the frame itself, but also electronics. For electronics, the Chinese find themselves rather not so capable in terms of preventing and mitigating corrosion, so they are trying to find ways and means to do that. In the next five to ten years there is a high chance that the Chinese will find a way to get around with these challenges, but then again the bigger question will be how those islands or features will play a bigger role in the future conflict or a limited conflict scenario in the South China Sea.

But what is certain to me is, if you put aside the question of whether those islands do exist in the five to ten years' time, whether they get sunk by a natural disaster, or they just get corroded naturally away, that the one area we have forgotten and we might not have been too focused on is the area of what we call maritime domain awareness. That is part of a bigger picture of what we call intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities. The Chinese have been moving very resolutely into these directions, and the one area that I thought was interesting is the very dual-use, sometimes very innocuous-sounding term called ocean observation network.

That ocean observation network has been acknowledged to be used not just to mitigate or prevent natural disasters at sea, but more ostensibly used for military purposes. In that regard we are seeing here in the next five to ten years tremendous amount of effort by the Chinese in terms of improving especially the area of underwater observation.

The one area that has so far evaded much of the scrutiny is a collaborative R&D arrangements with various key institutions that somehow indirectly fits into these programs. The Chinese could actually benefit from a whole slew of these arrangements. These arrangements could allow them to have what I will call, not just domain awareness, but dominant awareness in the South China Sea in the next five to ten years.

I am not so sure whether we can reach an equilibrium position. I think much of it depends on a lot of things. Assuming that those islands will not get washed away by any geological phenomenon and the Chinese finally find a way to strengthen them and make them stay forever, I think much of it depends on a few factors. One is that I think in the next five to ten years we will be envisaging the promulgation of a Code of Conduct, I mean because they were talking about three years, right?

So let's assume that in the next five years—give them two years more—they have a Code of Conduct. My very, not so sanguine thought is the moment they sign it, they will have the urgent handshake together, take the picture of it, and have the headlines being splashed with the achievement; in less than one year time, you're going to see the Code of Conduct rendered to be useless. And that, largely will be because the one big question we ask, and probably also the Chinese are going to ask, once we sign the code of conduct is, "Would that be the end of foreign military activities in the South China Sea?" And I don't think we are going to envisage that happening actually because all of us agreed the South China Sea was an international medium, and the mere operation of military vessels in even the international waters within the South China Sea could still be deemed as potentially provocative to China.

The point is that the Code of Conduct will never hold or will not hold at all. And that actually may lead to a whole new round of potential escalation and crisis altogether. I am not trying to apportion any particular blame to anyone, but what I am trying to say is that the envisioned structure of the Code of Conduct is not likely going to entail agreement that makes everybody happy and yet makes everybody unhappy at the same time.

So that is one issue. The second is to have the equilibrium, we may need to ensure that there is policy consistency on the part of Southeast Asian countries. If we are looking at certain Southeast Asian Countries, like Malaysia, Philippines and Indonesia, you really have to look at election cycle—the leaders that will be in power, and whether they change the policy in the first place. I think a lot of it is to have mercy to that aspect.

I think, perhaps, what is more important in this context is to empower the Southeast Asian countries, and this is nothing new. I think what we are seeing here is basically a continued enhancement of existing initiatives that help boost the Southeast Asia's maritime awareness capability.

And I think perhaps close US allies and partners who have common interest in the South China Sea, should at least to try coordinate or to synergize efforts in capacity building because what we are seeing here right now is a hodgepodge of very different initiatives that are being implemented. So, find the South China Sea and how we are going to harmonize all them together to ensure there are no duplication and no overlaps in those capacity building. I thought that was probably the one area to at least try to minimize the adverse impact of, you know, responding to such a situation in the South China Sea.

China's Growing Presence in the South Pacific*

Jonathan Pryke**

Abstract

Over the last two decades China has been steadily building its influence in the South Pacific. The pace and scale of this engagement has created significant anxiety in the Pacific as well as Western capitals about China's potential ambitions in the Pacific. In this address Jonathan Pryke details China's presence in the region, identifies what potential risks this newfound influence poses, and discusses how Western nations are pushing back.

It is great to be back in DC. As a Pacific analyst, we don't have the luxury of leaving our hemisphere too often, so forgive me if there's any jet-lag stumbles in my talk, but it is a delight to be back here in Washington nonetheless.

Now, when we talk about the Pacific, it is good to start by defining what is the South Pacific. So, the South Pacific—I wouldn't expect too many people in the room to spend too much time thinking about the South Pacific region, but when you do, you often think of it as a pretty homogenous place filled with smiling indigenous communities, pristine beaches and endless palm trees. While there is all that, the reality is that the Pacific is an exceptionally diverse part of the world. Its fourteen sovereign nations of a cumulative population of 13 million people span across 15% of the world's surface.

This is a very diverse part of the world. These countries span from the 11,000-person atoll nation of Tuvalu, to the 10-million-person population of Papua New Guinea (PNG), that has a landmass the size of California. So there's not actually much that is homogenous in the Pacific Islands region, but one thing that is homogenous across all Pacific countries, except—with the exception perhaps of Fiji, is that of vulnerability.

For these smaller countries, vulnerability comes from small size and remoteness from traditional markets. This vulnerability is further exacerbated by rampant population growth on already overcrowded islands and the multiplier effect of a warming climate that will affect the region through rising sea levels and increasing frequencies of natural disasters such as droughts and cyclones. In the larger countries like Papua New Guinea, vulnerability is driven by natural resource dependence that is reinforcing endemic patronage systems and corruption. One way or another these are all vulnerable countries, an important point to reinforce when we talk about increasing geopolitical activity in the region.

I am going to focus largely on China because that is what the theme of this conference is about. This century, the Chinese footprint in the Pacific has certainly been profoundly growing. While there have been pockets of ethnic Chinese in the Pacific for more than a century—I was

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just two weeks ago in northern Papua New Guinea in a place called Wewak where I met Papua New Guinea Chinese family that were now on their 5th generation of being in Papua New Guinea—but in the past 15 years these numbers have exploded.

Chinese state-owned enterprises have led the change here, in pursuit largely of economic opportunity, and fueled by Chinese lending. These state-owned enterprises have put down deep roots and are engaged in commercial activity across the board in almost every Pacific Island country. Chinese labor has arrived through these projects and also through fishing vessels, and has discovered paradoxically because of their size and remoteness that most Pacific Island countries are actually really high cost economies despite their relatively poor states of development. In the Pacific, the Chinese have found economic opportunity.

If you're a Fujian laborer—that is if you're a laborer from Fujian province, coming over on a state-owned enterprise project, or on a fishing vessel, if you set up a trade store in the Pacific where there is very little to no competition, you can make a heck of a lot more money than you could in Fujian province competing with a million other people setting up trade stores. So there is a big economic pull to the region that we do not see with the West, where the private sector largely sees the Pacific as devoid of economic opportunity because of its relative size and risk.

So, anyway, this Chinese labor has arrived, and remained in the region, setting up trade stores across the region, so we have this spread of Chinese engagement from the top end of town through high-end infrastructure investment, but then all the way down into the provinces, down to small towns.

To illustrate, this year my colleague at the Lowy Institute was observing the Solomon Islands election this year in a place called Makira, which is an island of about 6,000–7,000 people. Even on that little island in the Solomon Islands, there was a Chinese trade store. So, I do not want to undersell how profound the footprint of China is in the Pacific Islands region, but I also do not want to be an alarmist. I think it gives China far too much credit to say that since 2006 there has been some grand Machiavellian politburo and central committee endorsed Pacific strategy. It has been far messier than that and largely been driven by economic opportunity, and the human desires of greed from these state-owned enterprises and other actors. For most Pacific countries it seems that China has almost by mistake built its trade, aid and investment ties to emerge as a significant geopolitical power in the Pacific—which in many ways should not come as a surprise as it mirrors China's global ascent.

So, China has really stumbled into this influence it finds itself having in the Pacific Islands region. But when you talk to strategic analysts about the motive or when this motive started, or when this strategy began, they will tell you this does not really matter. Strategic analysts identify the risk through the lens of capability and the lens of intent, you add those two together. Capability is the thing that takes time to build, and China has built capability really by accident in the Pacific. Intent can change overnight.

And so in Western capitals, particularly in Canberra but also in DC, there is now absolute certainty that there is strategic intent from China's new-found leverage in the Pacific Islands region. A starting assertion here is that no one, not in the public domain at least, can tell you what China's ambitions are in the Pacific. There is no White Paper strategy for the Pacific devised by Beijing. China asserts that it has no ambitions in the region and operates as a benign power. The West is not so convinced.

But what are the risks of China's engagement in the Pacific, both to the West and the Pacific Island countries themselves? I break down the risks of Chinese engagement in the Pacific into two categories.

The first risk is what I see as being low probability, but of high-impact risk, is that China will use its leverage, be it debt, diplomacy, trade, to establish some form of permanent military facility somewhere in the Pacific. I say high impact because this would profoundly change the way

Australia would look at our own national security.

A permanent facility could enable China to more effectively disrupt our east coast trade routes. As of today, we only have 21 days of fuel reserves in Australia, and that is not a picture that looks like it is going to dramatically change anytime soon. It would also create a wedge between Australia and our strategic anchor in the United States. Such a facility would be quite expensive for China to establish and operate—both economically and reputationally. But it may be deemed worth it if it would generate a profound shift in Australian defense settings—forcing us to rapidly scale up our military and move away from an interoperability model with the United States and other allies.

The probability of this occurring in the region is low, however, largely because of the agency of the Pacific Island countries themselves. These are sovereign nations that wield their sovereignty liberally, and defend it passionately.

The Pacific do not want further militarization in the region. They didn't have a good go of it in the Second World War, or nuclear testing, and so there is a lot of pushback to this idea that they would just surrender some piece of sovereignty in exchange for some form of debt forgiveness or other political compromise. So, it is a low probability risk, also because the West, led by Australia have taken notice and have been more vigilant on this issue, and I'll come back to that in a moment.

The second risk, and as one that I see as being of much higher probability but lower impact, is the way in which China is engaging in the Pacific, mostly through these state-owned enterprises, and is undermining already weak and vulnerable institutions in the Pacific. Through elite capture and high-level corruption, largely again being driven by individual greed, these countries are becoming even more vulnerable. We run the risk of complete state failure in a Pacific country if trends continue.

So, the Lowy Institute has produced a paper on this if you want to know the whole history of the Bougainville march towards independence that you can find on our website. There is a 30-year history that has led us to this impending vote for independence. There is a bit of nuance in the vote. So, it's based on longstanding conflict between Bougainville—the people of Bougainville and the people of Papua New Guinea about the royalty rights behind one of the largest gold mines in the world that resides in Bougainville, and how these revenues were shared.

Now, some nuance around the referendum itself. There will be a referendum for independence, and I can 99.9 percent guarantee it is going to be overwhelmingly for independence.

But this leads us into a process of negotiation with the PNG government about what the process towards independence will look like and then the final step is to be ratified by the PNG Parliament. Now, PNG Parliament is very anxious that this will lead to a domino effect, or a further unravelling of the tenuous state that is PNG. There are other islands that may feel like they are more viable as a state apart from PNG than as a part of PNG.

So you might see this unravelling of the PNG state, which has 830 distinct cultural groups. It is not a homogenous society. This is just the start of a new process. I do not think we are going to see a new UN voting nation emerge in December. But we have heard that China is very interested that there have been offers put on the table on the ground.

But we do not know if those offers are genuine. There are a lot of carpetbaggers in the Pacific who read the tea leaves of Beijing and go out and try to act upon Beijing's behalf. But who are they actually representing? There are a lot of business interlocutors who say they represent someone. We do not actually know who they do represent. So, it is one more front to be anxious about, but I think there is a lot more to play out in this Bougainville independence process before we get to that point of China making proper inroads there.

I do not say this, sitting in my ivory tower in Sidney. This is the concern I hear from the more

enlightened colleagues and members of parliament I engage with throughout the Pacific on my frequent travels into the region.

This would be a problem for Australia. We want the Pacific region to be prosperous, and we would be the first to step in to help pick up the pieces if a state were to collapse in the region. But it would not profoundly change Australia's macroeconomic security settings, so higher probability, but lower impact.

I was at last year's APEC leaders' summit in Port Moresby observing the whole thing, and Xi really left a lasting impression on the region with his charm offensive. China, to be blunt, they are not great diplomats. They shoot themselves in the foot all the time. Xi did not do that. He was so generous with his time. I could not believe at the PNG parliament when his Secret Service actually let the parliament mob him and he shook hands with everyone and he just was completely, you know, there was no time pressure. He talked to every single parliamentarian. It was really quite amazing.

At the APEC leaders' dinner, that night, he sat there, yakking away with the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea after every other world leader had left. And this is not lost in the Pacific. They recognize that the most valuable commodity of the leader of the People's Republic of China (PRC) is time. And then it was also in such sharp contrast to Pence, who, because of Secret Service demands, they even said that, right up until before arrival, he was not even going to stay overnight in this third-world country because of security concerns. And then he ended up staying overnight. And, so, you know they just completely undermined any goodwill they could have built from that.

And he walked around in a bubble, and the only time you could get a local person near him was for a prearranged photo-op. It was quite sharp contrast, and this is something that China has been doing well for quite a while. This respect for equivalence, no matter what the imbalance of the size of the countries really does pay in spades, particularly when you have in contrast, Australia, where we give more than half of aid to the Pacific region in any given year but we have never had a bilateral guest or government visit from the Australian Prime Minister to these countries like Vanuatu or Fiji. Australian Prime Ministers just typically have not seen it worth their time. I can guarantee you that all Pacific leaders that recognize China make the near annual pilgrimage to Beijing and get the fully feted red-carpet treatment. We used to send middling level diplomats to meet with Pacific leaders in airports—hardly a sign of respect.

But if this is a comparative advantage that China has built over ten years, the good news is, it is an easy one to counter. We can just start doing this as well, and Australia has shown that you can catch up really quickly. The US has also stepped in here, I think, the Trump administration has done a great job with the North Pacific, with the compact states. If you cannot go there, bring them to you. All the leaders are very happy to come to DC to have facetime with President Trump. I think that played really well with the North Pacific.

Fortunately no one here is standing idle. Western nations are scrambling to reengage. We have had announcements of step-ups, resets, uplifts, pivots and pledges. This engagement has been spearheaded by Australia, where our new Prime Minister Scott Morrison has made the step-up his flagship policy initiative. It is great for me personally and professionally—being a Pacific analyst at the Lowy Institute has never looked better. So, thank you, China.

The step-up from Australia is by no means tokenistic. We are doing more of everything—aid, diplomacy, high-level political engagement. The most profound shift is within the structure of our bureaucracy, giving more profile to the Pacific at our departments of foreign affairs, defense, intelligence, everywhere, but also in the attention that is being given to the region by our most senior politicians. In 2019, we've had more than 50 ministerial-level visits in either direction to date, and in his first year in office, Prime Minister Morrison has visited the Pacific more times than any of his predecessors in the history of Australia have in their entire tenure as Prime

Minister.

So, by no means tokenistic. Where does this take us? I think this renewed vigilance is helping reduce the risks, but it needs to be consistent to be effective. Australia's history and the US's history in the Pacific go a long way further back than China's, and so, there is a lot of memories of neglect. The institutional memory in the Pacific goes back a lot further than in Australia, and so consistency moving forward is what is going to be the key.

China is going to have to work harder—and in different ways—if it wants to continue to build influence. But with some recent diplomatic defections in Kiribati and Solomon Islands they have got a bit more scope to play with in the Pacific. They are not backing down, and they are not being flat-footed in their engagement. So, geopolitics looks to have come home to roost in the Pacific, and is here to stay. China is not going anywhere.

We do have the specific aid map too that the Lowy Institute has produced that tracks all aid flows into the Pacific Islands region. The latest numbers we have for 2017 show that Australia gave 45% of all aid to the region, in 2017, New Zealand gave 9%, China gave 8%, the US gave about 8% as well.

Total aid to the Pacific region is dominated by 6 donors—80% of it comes from Australia, New Zealand, China, the United States, Japan and the Asian Development Bank. So, China has not taken over. But the point I try to make in my presentations these days is the China aid picture—China aid has done its job. It has got certain enterprises into the region.

These certain enterprises have put down deep economic roots. They are now competing in commercial activity across the board. They are winning in more government contracts and in other, just pure, commercial investment than they are relying on Exim Bank or China Development Bank. Exim Bank did its job, it got these businesses in the door and they can now survive without the Chinese loans. So we really shouldn't be talking about aid anymore, we should be talking about what they're doing in the commercial space.

International Law as a Tool to Combat China*

Atsuko Kanehara**

Abstract

It is quite frequently said that China cannot unilaterally change the *status quo* by forcible means. This is perfectly true vis-à-vis international law. No States can change international law unilaterally in order to justify their violations of existing international law rules. We can find three elements here. First, “unilateral,” second, “international law,” and third, “forcible means.” First, regarding unilateralism, China has unilaterally claimed its historical rights over extravagantly wide sea areas encircled by the so-called nine-dash line in the South China Sea. Second, concerning international law, China has been violating the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the most important treaty for regulating maritime issues. In a world-famous case, namely *The South China Sea Case*, the arbitral tribunal definitively denied the validity of the Chinese historic rights under UNCLOS. Third, by various aggressive conducts, China has posed a serious threat to other countries not only in the South China Sea but also in the East China Sea. Based upon such an understanding of the situations that China has created in the international dimension, first, I will explain what wrong China is doing from the perspective of international law, which is my field. Second, I will consider a possible way to combat China from a Japanese perspective.

My name is Atsuko Kanehara, Professor of Public International Law at Sophia University, Tokyo, Japan. It is a great honor for me to have the opportunity to make a brief presentation on this occasion.

Introduction: What is Wrong with China from the Perspective of International Law?

It is almost the general recognition among all the participants here that “China has been engaged in wrong-doing.” But, precisely speaking, what wrong is China doing? The starting point for considering the ways to combat China should be to establish an exact understanding as to what wrong China is doing. Doctors need to diagnose first, before they treat their patients. The same holds true with us.

Therefore, first, I will make clear the wrong that China has been doing. I will do this from a

* This article is based on a presentation made by the author at the symposium “China’s Maritime Ambitions in the First Island Chain and Beyond” held by JIIA and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) on November 18, 2019. For more information, please visit the JIIA website at <https://www.jiia-jic.jp/en/events/2019/11/chinas-maritime-ambitions-in-the-first-island-chain-and-beyond.html>.

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perspective of international law, which is my field.

It is quite frequently said that “China cannot unilaterally change international law by forcible means.” We can find three elements here: first, “unilateral,” second, “international law,” and third “forcible means.”

From the perspective of international law, I will take up these three points in this order.

1. “Unilateralism” under International Law

First, regarding “unilateralism,” China has unilaterally claimed its historical rights over extravagantly wide sea areas encircled by the so-called nine-dash line in the South China Sea.

In principle, international law is created based upon the agreements of sovereign States. Sovereign States are not allowed to unilaterally create international law.

Sovereign States exist as part of international society and they are equal and independent. Thus, there is no legislative authority that has the competence to enact laws with legally binding force on all sovereign States. In place of an authoritative legislative organ, sovereign States create international law by their mutual agreement. International law takes the forms of treaties and customary laws. We find the element of agreement among sovereign States in treaties and, to a certain degree, in customary laws, as well.

There are, however, some cases in which international law allows sovereign States to act unilaterally. A typical example is as follows.

Coastal States are allowed to unilaterally establish the limits of their jurisdictional sea areas, such as territorial seas, exclusive economic zones (EEZs), and continental shelf. Nonetheless, I have to immediately add that in order to obtain validity with respect to other States, the limits unilaterally set by coastal States should be in accordance with the relevant international law rules. I can introduce to you a very famous part of the judgement rendered by the International Court of Justice in the 1951 *Fisheries Case*.

Although it is true that the act of delimitation is necessarily a *unilateral act*, because only the coastal State is competent to undertake it, *the validity of the delimitation with regard to other States depends upon international law.*” (emphasis added)

In a world-famous case, namely, *The South China Sea Case*, the arbitral tribunal definitively denied the validity of the Chinese historic rights under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). UNCLOS is the most important treaty on the law of the sea. The decision by the tribunal has a legally binding force on China. South Asian countries and others in the world have not recognized any validity to the Chinese claims of historic rights in the South China Sea. Accordingly, legally speaking, there is no room for the Chinese historic rights that are unilaterally claimed by China to survive under UNCLOS. This unilateral claim by China and its attitude to regard the decision as null and void are totally reproachable and, therefore, “wrong.”

2. “International law”

The second element for which to criticize China is its acts contrary to international law. As I already mentioned, the most important international law currently for regulating maritime issues is UNCLOS.

UNCLOS determines the width of jurisdictional sea areas and sea-bed, such as territorial seas, EEZs, and continental shelf. The so-called nine-dash line encloses extravagantly wide sea areas over which China claims historic rights. This is totally contrary to UNCLOS and, thus, “wrong.”

3. “Forcible Means”

Third, international law prohibits both the use of force and the posing of threats by force. The most important provision, in this regard, is Article 2, Paragraph 4 of the United Nations Charter, a multilateral treaty.

Let's look concretely at China's acts both in the South China Sea and in the East China Sea.

China has frequently dispatched its Coast Guard vessels to the territorial seas of neighboring States. This is for the purpose of overtly demonstrating China's sovereignty over those sea areas. The Coast Guard vessels have been recently incorporated into the Chinese military under the country's legal system. Chinese fishing boats have also come to the territorial seas of neighboring States, in some cases escorted by China's Coast Guard vessels. The Chinese fishermen have suddenly become militias. Even China's military vessels enter the territorial seas of other countries, including Japan.

In the East China Sea, particularly in the Japanese territorial sea surrounding the Senkaku Islands, these kinds of conducts by China have been repeated almost periodically.

It is not always easy to precisely define what "the use of force" is, and what "the posing of threats by force" is, under international law. Thus, it is not an easy decision to make that China's acts fall under the categories of the use of force and/or the posing of threats by force.

But, in reality, as a matter of fact, nobody can deny that these Chinese strategies of making use of its Coast Guard vessels and fishermen as militias, and even its military vessels, have posed serious threats to neighboring States. South Asian countries and Japan share common criticism against China. The tense situations produced by China have been maintained over more than a decade in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, as well.

I strongly believe and I can safely say that those Chinese strategies are regarded as uses of "forcible means." This is so in considering the actual threats posed by China to Japan and South Asian countries. Thus, the Chinese acts that I have just explained are no doubt reproachable, and, therefore, "wrong."

In this way, we have reached a common understanding as to the precise meaning of "what wrong China is doing."

Before moving onto the next point, let me explain the usefulness of international law even when faced with such wrong-doing by China. I would like to emphasize this point to demonstrate the solid validity of international law.

It is true that China has been violating international law. Regarding the arbitral tribunal's decision made on the 12th of July 2016, China regards that decision as null and void, and totally disregards it. But, I can give you one typical example of reliance even by China on international law. From the beginning to the end of the tribunal's procedure, China was totally absent. Nonetheless, China issued an excessive number of national statements to criticize the tribunal's procedures. In addition, China also explains its position concerning its historic rights by saying that Chinese historic rights are "based upon customary international law." While China violates UNCLOS, a multilateral treaty, it seeks legal justification for its historic rights based upon "customary international law." In that sense, even China needs legal justification based upon public international law. Therefore, in relation to China, a rule breaker, international law solidly maintains its validity.

Then, based upon a common understanding of what wrong China is doing, next, I will consider possible ways to combat China from a Japanese perspective.

4. Rule of Law

"The rule of law" has been the main pillar of Japanese diplomatic policies for more than a decade. It contains three principles: first, any claims of rights should find legal justification, second, no forcible changes of law are allowed, and third, disputes should be peacefully resolved.

The Chinese strategies, as we have just confirmed, are definitely contrary to "the rule of law." Therefore, Japan, as a responsible player for maintaining world order, should take measures to recover and maintain the said order. Japan should respond to China in order to make it comply with international law.

Then, how is Japan to make China obey international law? In this regard, needless to say, Japan should itself adhere to “the rule of law.”

In international society, sovereign States exist with equality to and independence from each other. There are no authorities above sovereign States. As a result of this, in international society, no compulsory enforcement measures can be taken to maintain the effectiveness of international law. In this sense, international law, critically, lacks teeth.

Under this reality of international law and international society, with respect to the ways to combat Chinese wrong-doings, two points may be emphasized.

First, with regard to China in the East China Sea, Japan must respond without escalating the tense situation between the two countries. The Japan Coast Guard, rather than the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force, copes with the Chinese vessels approaching and entering Japanese territorial sea. This has become almost a permanent situation for a decade in the Japanese territorial sea surrounding the Senkaku Islands. These islands are definitely Japanese ones from legal and historical perspectives. Nevertheless, China has claimed its sovereignty over them and has tried to overtly demonstrate its sovereignty even by using “forcible means” in the sense explained before. The Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force is already ready for cooperation with the Japan Coast Guard. But, Japan, with the highest prudence, has tried to prevent the tense situation from growing into a military situation. This policy of non-escalation is important for Japan to avoid forcible means as much as possible.

This Japanese policy is to be taken mainly in bilateral relations with China.

Second, Japan has been taking advantage of the “interplay” of bilateral, regional and multilateral dimensions.

The most important thing is for States around the world to form a strong legal circle around China from which it cannot escape. For that purpose, bilateral, regional, and multilateral measures that may have cumulative effects should be taken. This is not an instant method that will have instant results. It will take time, but enclosing China in the legal world is very important.

I said “interplay,” as Japan expects “synergy” to be produced by bilateral, regional and multilateral measures. For instance, a regional measure taken in the South China Sea would work not only in that sea area, but also in the bilateral relationship between China and Japan, and in the region of the East China Sea, as well. Multilateral voices criticizing China would have impacts on its behaviors regionally in the South and East China Seas. Thus, “synergy” means the functions produced by the measures taken at these different levels. The functions are also found at different levels, namely the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels.

At a regional level, for instance, Japan is expecting a code of conduct to be established by ASEAN countries. The code of conduct needs to be effective enough to make China comply with international law. At a world-wide level, Japan’s policy of “the rule of law” has been sufficiently well recognized. Japan strongly urges other States to take the same stance toward China in order to build a strong circle in the legal world from which China can find no escape. With respect to the freedom of navigation, the US, Australia, and Japan, as well as other countries, have cooperated to maintain the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea where China claims its historic rights over extravagantly wide sea areas. Furthermore, EU countries might not have as keen an interest in relation to the South China Sea situations as the US, Australia, and Japan. Nevertheless, they have criticized China’s negative attitude toward the decision rendered by the arbitral tribunal.

It is true that regional cooperation is very important, but in addition to that, multilateral cooperation is also expected and required. Multilayered cooperation is indispensable to strongly establish a legal circle from which China cannot escape.

These ways that I have mentioned so far will not have instant results. They will not immediately work, either. Without a strong and solid attitude for a certain amount of time, it will be difficult to reach our desired outcome. Nonetheless, as responsible players that abide by

international law, Japan, along with other cooperating countries, should solidly continue such measures to combat China in a very “patient” manner.

China's "Nine Gates" and Security Policy in the Indo-Pacific Challenges for Japan*

Tetsuo Kotani**

Abstract

China has been conducting forays through nine straits into the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is imperative for China to secure free use of these routes and gain the ability to prevent rival powers from using them. Of the nine straits that China is aiming to use, five lie within Japanese territorial waters, and the Self-Defense Forces are constantly carrying out monitoring and surveillance in these areas. The remaining four straits lie in the territorial waters of other nations, and since China's anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities are improving rapidly, keeping all nine straits constantly under surveillance, and closing them in the event of a contingency is now impossible. Challenges Therefore, in addition to strengthening its defense of the southwestern region and boosting the Self-Defense Forces' presence in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean, Japan is also responding to Chinese forays by seeking to establish the rule of law in the seas and by helping capacity building in littoral states, based on the ideas set out in the free and open Indo-Pacific.

Introduction

On December 27, 2010, the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper carried an analytical article under the headline "Oyogi-deru kyoryū: Kokonotsu no mon" (A Mighty Dragon Swims Out: China's Nine Gates), arguing that China was aiming to expand into the Indian and Pacific Oceans through a series of nine "exit gates." In the Pacific, these were a route from the Sea of Japan through the Sōya (or La Perouse) Strait, one from the East China Sea through the Miyako Strait and the southwestern Nansei Islands, and another from the Taiwan Strait through the Bashi Channel. In the Indian Ocean, the routes ran from the South China Sea through the Strait of Malacca, Sunda Strait, and Lombok Strait. The article quoted a Chinese military source who said it was imperative for China to secure free use of these routes and gain the ability to prevent rival powers from using them, since the routes were "kept under constant surveillance in times of peace, and could be closed in the event of a contingency."¹

In fact, China has been conducting forays through these nine straits into the Indo-Pacific since it first sent its navy into the Indian Ocean to help suppress piracy off the coast of Somalia in 2008. China's navy routinely carries out exercises and intelligence gathering in the East China Sea, and in the South China Sea China has carried out extensive reclamation projects on islands and shoals that are gradually being fitted for military purposes. At the same time, it regularly sends ships,

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¹ "Oyogi-deru kyoryū: Kokonotsu no mon" (A Mighty Dragon Swims Out: China's Nine Gates), *Asahi Shimbun*, December 27, 2010.

including submarines, into the Indian Ocean. China already possesses what is effectively an overseas base in Djibouti, and is generally assumed to be looking to build further overseas bases in the island nations of the Indian and Pacific Oceans as part of the Belt and Road Initiative. China also continues to carry out actions aimed at changing the status quo in the East China Sea and South China Sea, through a hybrid strategy using government ships and civilian fishing vessels. This maritime expansion is an issue of shared concern for littoral countries throughout the Indo-Pacific region. It is also a major challenge for Japan, from the perspective both of defending its territory and securing the safety of its sea lanes.

This paper considers the measures that Japan should take to respond more effectively to China's expansion into the Indian and Pacific Oceans through these nine straits, and the policies it should take to maintain the stability of its sea lanes and the international order based on the law of the sea. First, it reviews the current situation with regard to China's forays into the Indian and Pacific Oceans through these nine straits, then evaluates Japan's maritime security policy in the Indo-Pacific region. Lastly, it considers some of the ways in which Japan can respond more effectively to China's maritime intrusions and attempts to expand its influence.

1. China's Forays into the Indian and Pacific Oceans

In recent years, the naval branch of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been increasingly active in maritime regions of the Indo-Pacific.

In the East China Sea, the PLA now routinely carries out intelligence gathering and exercises by air and sea, and is carrying out forays into the Pacific Ocean with increasing frequency. The point most often used as an "exit point" on these forays is the Miyako Strait. In December 2016 and June 2019, a Chinese carrier passed through the Miyako Strait with a fleet of accompanying warships, and in January 2018 submarines were confirmed to have navigated submerged through the Miyako Strait into the East China Sea, demonstrating that the navy has increased its blue water operational capability. Additionally, Chinese warships are known to have passed through the Ōsumi Strait and Tokara Strait, confirming that the Chinese navy now uses various straits among the southwestern Nansei Islands as ways out into Pacific. In the skies, reconnaissance aircraft, fighters, bombers, and electronic warfare aircraft have also flown above the Miyako Strait into the Pacific.² In August 2017, six bombers flew through the Miyako Strait before approaching close to the Kii Peninsula. The US Department of Defense evaluates these flights as demonstrating that China has the capability to attack facilities belonging to the US Armed Forces and Japanese Self-Defense Forces on Honshu.³

These incursions by the PLA into the Pacific are related to increasing Chinese pressure on Taiwan since the government led by Tsai Ing-wen came to office in 2016. The PLA has carried out frequent flights around Taiwan with bombers and fighters, and there have also been increasingly frequent forays from the Bashi Channel through the Miyako Strait into the East China Sea, and from the Miyako Strait into the Bashi Channel.⁴ There have also been circumnavigations through the waters surrounding Taiwan by Chinese warships, including aircraft carriers. For example, in December 2016 a Chinese carrier passed through the Miyako Strait then navigated through the Bashi Channel and entered the South China Sea, before passing through the Strait of Taiwan and sailing toward the East China Sea.⁵ In April 2018, a Chinese carrier navigated from the South China Sea through the Bashi Channel into the Pacific, and from the Miyako Strait into the

² Ministry of Defense of Japan, *Defense of Japan 2019 Annual White Paper*, September 2019, pp. 70–73.

³ US Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2018*, May 16, 2018, p. 119.

⁴ *Defense of Japan 2019 Annual White Paper*, p. 73.

⁵ Ministry of National Defense of Taiwan, *National Defense Report 2017*, December 2017, p. 44.

East China Sea.⁶ In June 2019, a carrier navigated from the East China Sea through the Miyako Strait, then passed through the Bashi Channel into the South China Sea and through the Strait of Taiwan, according to a report by Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense.⁷

The PLA is also moving its ships and aircraft with increasing frequency from the East China Sea through the Tsushima Strait into the Sea of Japan. Incursions by ships into the Sea of Japan are nothing new, but in August 2016 and January 2017, navy ships and aircraft carried out naval exercises in the Sea of Japan. Since 2017, bombers, fighters, and reconnaissance planes of the Chinese air force have flown over the Tsushima Strait and entered the airspace above the Sea of Japan, and the frequency of these incursions is increasing rapidly. The navy has also increased its forays through the Tsugaru Strait and Sōya Strait into the Sea of Japan and the Pacific.⁸ In July 2019, Chinese and Russian bombers carried out joint patrols, in which planes passed from the East China Sea over the Tsushima Strait.⁹

China is moving ahead with militarization in the South China Sea, where it has territorial disputes with several neighboring countries. In the Paracel Islands, we know that China has been extending existing runways and deploying surface-to-air missiles to the region, and there have been confirmed take-offs and landings of fighter and bomber aircraft. Since 2014, China has undertaken large-scale land reclamation projects at seven locations in the Spratly Islands. It is known that China has constructed major runway facilities here, deployed surface-to-air and surface-to-ship missiles, and installed radar jamming equipment, as well as constructing port facilities, helipads, and radar and communications facilities.¹⁰ Although there have not yet been confirmed take-offs or landings of fighters or bombers on the Spratly Islands, there have been confirmed sightings of “combat air patrols” by bombers in the South China Sea.¹¹ If China converted the Spratly Islands to use as a base for bombers, it would gain the ability to operate into the Indian Ocean.¹² China has also deployed strategic nuclear submarines to Hainan Island,¹³ and is believed to have carried out numerous submarine operations in the South China Sea.

The PLA is also active in the Indian Ocean, from the perspective of what it calls “far sea defense” (*yuanyang huwei*). It has been involved in anti-piracy measures in the Gulf of Aden since 2008. In 2017, China opened a de facto overseas base in Djibouti, which it is actively using for logistics support. Under the Belt and Road Initiative, China is actively working on developing ports throughout the region, including Kyaukphyu in Myanmar, Hambantota in Sri Lanka, and Gwadar in Pakistan, and has taken a 99-year leasehold on Hambantota from Sri Lanka, after that country defaulted on loan repayments. It is likely that China regards these ports as

⁶ *Defense of Japan 2019 Annual White Paper*, p. 72; Joint Staff Press Release, “Chūgoku kaigun kantei no dōkō ni tsuite” (Regarding movements of ships belonging to the Chinese Navy), April 21, 2018, https://www.mod.go.jp/js/Press/press2018/press_pdf/p20180421_01.pdf.

⁷ “Chūgoku kūbo ga Taiwan issshū: shunō kaidan-mae ni Bei kensei ka” (Chinese carrier circles Taiwan: Possibly signaling a warning shot to the US on the eve of summit), *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, June 25, 2019. <https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXMZO46556010V20C19A6910M00/>.

⁸ *Defense of Japan 2019 Annual White Paper*, pp. 73–74.

⁹ Joint Staff Press Release, “Chūgoku-ki oyobi Roshia-ki no Higashi Shina Kai oyobi Nihonkai ni okeru hikō ni tsuite” (Regarding flights by Chinese and Russian planes in the East China Sea and Sea of Japan), July 23, 2019, https://www.mod.go.jp/js/Press/press2019/press_pdf/p20190723_01.pdf.

¹⁰ *Defense of Japan 2019 Annual White Paper*, pp. 75–77.

¹¹ *Defense of Japan 2019 Annual White Paper*, p. 77.

¹² US Office of the Secretary of Defense, op. cit., p. 62.

¹³ US Office of the Secretary of Defense, op. cit., p. 66.

potential future military bases.¹⁴ A Chinese submarine presence in the Indian Ocean has also been confirmed, and Chinese submarines are known to have entered several ports in the region, including Colombo, Sri Lanka in 2014 and Karachi, Pakistan in 2017.¹⁵ Information is lacking on what route the Chinese Navy is using to enter the Indian Ocean, but surface shipping at least is believed to pass through the Strait of Malacca. However, the Strait of Malacca is too shallow to be suitable for submarines, and it is likely that its submarines use either the Lombok or the Sunda Strait.

China's forays sometimes contravene existing international laws and rules, and represent a threat to the freedom of navigation and freedom of the skies. Official government vessels belonging to the Chinese Coast Guard linger in waters surrounding the Senkaku Islands on an almost daily basis, and incursions into Japanese territorial waters happen on average around three times a month.¹⁶ These incursions into Japanese territorial waters by government vessels cannot be regarded as "innocent passage." Similarly, navigation in the waters adjacent to the Senkaku Islands by Chinese reconnaissance vessels, combat ships, and submerged submarines, are provocative acts that serve to increase tensions, even if they do not count as breaches of international law. The Air Defense Identification Zone that China has set up in the skies over the East China Sea is an attempt to place all aircraft passing through the zone under the control of the Chinese authorities; this could therefore easily impinge on freedom of overflight and other freedoms of the sky.¹⁷ Indeed, there have already been incidents in which the warning and surveillance activities of the Self-Defense Forces and the US Armed Forces have been obstructed.¹⁸ In June 2016, when a Chinese intelligence-gathering vessel passed through the Tokara Strait in Japanese territorial waters, China argued that it regarded the strait as one commonly "used by international navigation," and asserted its right to pass through the waters by right of transit passage, which involves a higher degree of freedom than innocent passage.¹⁹ In July 2016, an arbitral tribunal constituted under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea handed down an award denying China's "historical rights" in the South China Sea according to its "nine-dashed line." China refused to recognize the award, undermining the international order based on the law of the sea.²⁰

¹⁴ See, for example, Nicholas Szechenyi, ed., "China's Maritime Silk Road: Strategic and Economic Implications for the Indo-Pacific Region," CSIS, March 2018, https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/180404_Szechenyi_ChinaMaritimeSilkRoad.pdf.

¹⁵ *Defense of Japan 2019 Annual White Paper*, pp. 77–78.

¹⁶ On the activities of Chinese government ships around the Senkaku Islands, see "Senkaku shotō shūhen kaiiki ni okeru Chūgoku kōsen-tō no dōkō to wagakuni no taisho" (Movements of Chinese government ships in the waters around the Senkaku Islands and Japan's response), on the website of the Japan Coast Guard, <https://www.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/mission/senkaku/senkaku.html>.

¹⁷ Website of the Japanese Ministry for Foreign Affairs, "Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs on the announcement on the 'East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone' by the Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China," November 24, 2013. https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_000098.html.

¹⁸ *Defense of Japan 2019 Annual White Paper*, p. 72.

¹⁹ Nagai Ōki, "Kagoshima-oki no Tokara kaikyō, Chūgoku no 'Kokusai Kaikyō' shuchō ga hidane: Nihon seifu wa 'mitomerarezu,' Gunkan haken no keizoku o keikai" (China's claims that the Tokara Strait off Kagoshima is open to "international navigation" creates sparks. Government of Japan refuses to recognize China's claims, and remains on guard against continued dispatch of Chinese warships to the area), *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, digital edition, June 21, 2016, https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXLASFS20H6A_Q6A620C1PP8000/.

²⁰ Kotani Tetsuo, "The South China Sea Arbitration: No, It's Not a PCA Ruling," *Maritime Issues*, November 17, 2016, <http://www.maritimeissues.com/south-china-sea-arbitration-ruling/the-south-china-sea-arbitration-no-its-not-a-pca-ruling.html>.

As the above examples show, China is strengthening its anti access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities in the East China Sea and South China Sea, and is acting with increasing confidence and brazenness based on its own unique interpretations of international law, even when at peace. In the case of a crisis involving Taiwan, it is reasonable to assume that China now has considerable ability to delay access to the US military and other forces. In the Indian Ocean, the establishment of bases for maintaining long-term military operations is an issue for the future. In the immediate term, China is likely to continue with the development of port facilities already underway in littoral states of the Indian Ocean, while expanding operations using submarines, with their high degree of invulnerability.

Additionally, China has started to include the South Pacific in its Belt and Road Initiative, and is increasing its influence through aid to the island nations of the Pacific. China is involved in the development of four ports that observers suggest offer a high potential for military use in the future: at Suva, Fiji; at Anewa Bay and Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea; and at Luganville, Vanuatu.²¹ If these ports do come to be used by the PLA, that might lead to an increase in forays from South China Sea via the Sulu Sea and Celebes Sea in the Western Pacific, where monitoring and surveillance by littoral states and US Armed Forces are more difficult.

2. Evaluation of Japan's Maritime Security Policy

What steps is Japan taking in response to China's forays onto the high seas through these nine straits?

Firstly, Japan is strengthening its defensive capability around its southwestern Nansei Islands, to defend against forays from the East China Sea into the Pacific. The 2010 revisions to the National Defense Program Guidelines shifted the basic emphasis of Japan's defensive posture from the north to a new posture with an emphasis on defending against a potential threat from the southwest. The 2013 edition of the Guidelines defined Japan's objective as being to defend the southwestern islands using a dynamic joint defense force. The plan prioritizes strengthening Japan's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities in the air and seas around Japan, and developing the ability to rapidly deploy land-based units while maintaining maritime and air superiority. At the same time, steps were taken to increase fighter strength and deploy an airborne early warning squadron at Naha, as well as introducing stand-off missiles, increasing submarine strength, and establishing an amphibious rapid deployment brigade and rapid deployment units for defense of remote islands, as well as deployment to the southwestern region of airborne early-warning units and surface-to-ship and surface-to-air guided missiles.²²

These measures effectively boosted Japan's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities against PLA activities on sea and in the air around Japan. For example, units from the Air Self-Defense Force scrambled on 999 occasions through FY2018; of these, a total of 638 were in response to Chinese planes.²³ However, the rapid increase in scrambling incidents has meant that Air SDF pilots are no longer able to secure sufficient training time to prepare for an emergency contingency. Also, Chinese aircraft flying from the Bashi Channel toward the southwestern Nansei Islands, or along the Pacific coast of Japan, can be difficult to detect

²¹ Yatsuzuka Masaaki, "Chūgoku no Taiheiyō tōshokoku e no shinshutsu to 'Ittai ichiro' kōsō (China's expansion into the island nations of the Pacific and the Belt and Road Initiative), *NIDS Commentary*, No. 73, May 25, 2018, <http://www.nids.mod.go.jp/publication/commentary/pdf/commentary073.pdf>.

²² Government of Japan, "National Defense Program Guidelines for FY2014 and beyond," December 2013, pp. 17–24.

²³ Joint Staff Press Release, "Statistics on scrambles through fiscal year 2018," April 12, 2019, https://www.mod.go.jp/js/Press/press2019/press_pdf/p20190412_06.pdf.

by ground-based radar, and this area is becoming something of an air defense blind spot.²⁴ Additionally, China is rapidly modernizing its aircraft, ships, and submarines, and the quality of the guided missiles carried by these units is also improving. It is therefore thought that a response to an emergency contingency is becoming more difficult.

To respond to the overall improvement in China's military strength, the 2018 revisions to the National Defense Program Guidelines defined the nation's defense objectives as being to build a "Multi-Domain Defense Force" capable of executing cross-domain operations, not only on land and sea and in the air but also in the new domains of space, cyberspace, and the electromagnetic spectrum. The thinking is that combining capabilities across domains generates synergy; therefore, even when inferiority exists in the air or at sea, this inferiority can be overcome and defense objectives accomplished. To this end, the guidelines included such measures as increasing the numbers and capabilities of fighters, introducing units of hyper-velocity gliding projectiles for defense of remote islands, strengthening monitoring and surveillance along the Pacific through unmanned aerial systems, refurbishing the destroyer *Izumo* to allow operations of short-takeoff-and-vertical-landing (STOVL) aircraft, building integrated air and missile defense capability, establishing a new squadron specializing in space domain missions, establishing a cyber defense unit, and establishing a new unit to enhance defense capability in the use of the electromagnetic spectrum.²⁵

Japan is also strengthening its cooperation with the United States. In the 2015 revisions to the Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation, peacetime cooperation was expanded, and many new fields incorporated, including intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, maritime security, training and exercises, and defense against ballistic missile attacks. In the event of an armed attack against Japan, new areas of cooperation were added, including repelling attacks against remote islands and cross-domain operations (including in the space and cyberspace domains). In defending attacks against islands, the Self-Defense Forces will have primary responsibility for preventing and repelling ground attacks, with the United States military supporting and supplementing the Self-Defense Forces' operations. To ensure the effectiveness of cooperation between the allies, a new alliance coordination mechanism was established to strengthen policy and operational coordination, along with an upgraded bilateral planning mechanism.²⁶

In the vital sea lanes of the South China Sea and Indian Ocean, Japan is mainly working to support capacity building in littoral countries and to establish a stronger presence in the region. In November 2016, Japanese Defense Minister Inada Tomomi released the Vientiane Vision, outlining principles for defense cooperation between Japan and ASEAN. These included consolidating order based on the rule of international law, strengthening maritime security, and support for capacity building in ASEAN in various fields. Based on this, a seminar on international law was held in June 2017 onboard a destroyer in the waters close to Singapore. Japan has also offered 10 patrol vessels and two large patrol vessels to the Philippines, as well as five TC-90 training aircraft.²⁷ Japan altered the TC-90 deal from a lease to a free transfer, and has also provided education for pilots in the Philippine Navy and support for maintenance staff in

²⁴ Interview by the author with Self-Defense Forces official, April 5, 2019.

²⁵ Government of Japan, "National Defense Program Guidelines for FY2019 and beyond," December 2018, pp. 10–30.

²⁶ Ministry of Defense of Japan, "Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation," April 27, 2015, https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/anpo/shishin/shishin_20150427j.html.

²⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Japan-Philippines Summit Meeting," October 26, 2016, https://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sea2/ph/page3e_000608.html.

the country's navy and elsewhere.²⁸ The Self-Defense Forces do not participate in the freedom-of-navigation operations of the US military, but since 2017 the Maritime Self-Defense Force has sent ships including destroyers carrying helicopters into the Indo-Pacific, and has participated in exercises and friendship-building courtesy visits to ports in various countries around the region.²⁹ In September 2018, a submarine from the Maritime Self-Defense Force visited Cam Ranh port in Vietnam.³⁰ Additionally, the Self-Defense Forces have been involved in cooperation in capability building and exercises in the Indo-Pacific together with the armed forces of the United States, Australia, India, the United Kingdom, France, and other countries, including in island regions of the Pacific.

In response to the threat facing the international maritime order based on the law of the sea in the Indo-Pacific, the National Security Strategy adopted by the Japanese government in 2013 calls for “open and stable seas” based on international laws and conventions. To provide more concrete substance to this vision, at the Shangri-La Dialogue (Asian Security Summit) in May 2014, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo proposed the “three principles of rule of law,” namely: (i) making and clarifying claims based on international law, (ii) not using force or coercion in trying to drive claims, and (iii) seeking to settle disputes by peaceful means. In August 2016, Japan launched the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision, built around three main pillars, namely: 1. Promotion and establishment of the rule of law, freedom of navigation, and free trade; 2. Pursuit of economic prosperity (connectivity, and strengthening of economic cooperation through EPAs/FTAs and investment agreements), and 3. Commitment to peace and stability (establishing maritime law enforcement, humanitarian assistance, and emergency disaster relief).³¹ The FOIP has been endorsed by the United States, India, Australia, the United Kingdom, France, ASEAN, and other countries, confirming the importance of maintaining a law-based maritime order.

Challenges remain for Japan's maritime security policy, however. Firstly, the Bashi Channel remains a blind spot in the country's surveillance and reconnaissance. The ability to respond to the Chinese missile threat in the East China Sea and the Western Pacific is also a major issue. In the South China Sea, support for capability building must inevitably be limited to the non-traditional security sphere, but considering China's maritime activities in this area, strengthening the maritime domain awareness (MDA) capabilities of littoral states is a pressing task. Also crucial are measures to allow monitoring of Chinese submarine movements in the Lombok and Sunda Straits. There is also a need to consider a response to a possible high-end conflict in the South China Sea. Japan also needs to ensure that the PLA does not gain the ability to monopolize the port facilities that China is building in island nations in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. In the long term, the main challenge will be to maintain the rules-based maritime order in the Indo-Pacific, while working to change China's distinctive interpretation of international law.

3. Issues that Japan Needs to Address for the Future

Before considering the responses Japan should take in the future, let's first recall what happened during the Cold War era. When Britain withdrew its troops from East of Suez at the end of the 1960s, it created a power vacuum in the Indian Ocean. The Soviet Union advanced into the Indian Ocean from the Pacific, threatening the sea lanes of the Western alliance. This prompted the

²⁸ *Defense of Japan 2019 Annual White Paper*, p. 364.

²⁹ Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, “Goeikan *Izumo*, *Sazanami* no chōki kōdō (2017)” (Longterm movements of the destroyers *Izumo* and *Sazanami*, 2017), no date, <https://www.mod.go.jp/msdf/operation/cooperate/izumo-sazanami/>.

³⁰ *Defense of Japan 2019 Annual White Paper*, p. 362.

³¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Summary Page: “Free and Open Indo-Pacific,” December 20, 2018, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000430632.pdf>.

United States to widen the area of responsibility of its Pacific Command in 1972, to encompass the Indian Ocean as well as the Pacific.³² With the US Armed Forces expanding their duties to the Indian Ocean, Japan was pressed to strengthen its defensive capabilities in the Western Pacific. Japan boosted its monitoring, surveillance capabilities in the Sōya, Tsugaru, and Tsushima Straits, and strengthened its anti-submarine defensive capabilities and anti-warship attack capabilities, effectively keeping the Soviet Pacific Fleet pinned within the Sea of Japan, and thereby successfully contributing to securing the safety of the sea lanes.³³

Of the nine straits that China is aiming to use, five lie within Japanese territorial waters, and the Self-Defense Forces are constantly carrying out monitoring and surveillance in these areas. In this sense, the Cold War experience of having sealed the three straits to the Soviet Navy is still somewhat effective as a way of warding off Chinese incursions. However, the remaining four straits lie in the territorial waters of other nations, and since China's A2/AD capabilities are improving rapidly, keeping all nine straits constantly under surveillance, and closing them in the event of a contingency is now impossible for practical purposes. For this reason, in addition to strengthening its defense of the southwestern region and boosting the Self-Defense Forces' presence in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean, Japan is also responding to Chinese forays by seeking to establish the rule of law in the seas and by helping capacity building in littoral states, based on the ideas set out in the FOIP.

The first challenge for Japan in the years to come will be to improve its monitoring and surveillance capabilities in the Bashi Channel. In particular, it is vital to be able to monitor the movements of Chinese aircraft coming from the South China Sea through the Bashi Channel and approaching the Nansei Islands of the southwestern region. For this, cooperation with the Philippines and Taiwan will be essential. In the Philippines, Japan is already giving assistance together with the United States to build MDA capacity, and cooperation is underway both within a bilateral Japan-Philippines and a trilateral Japan-US-Philippines framework.³⁴ On the other hand, security cooperation between Japan and Taiwan is politically sensitive, and the reality is that almost no progress has been made on this so far. However, it seems likely that the PLA will be increasingly active in the areas around Taiwan in the future, and it will be necessary to consider a framework for sharing intelligence at the very least, perhaps with the United States as intermediary. If this could be extended to exchanges between units of the Self-Defense Forces and the Taiwanese military, so much the better.

To respond to China's missile threat, Japan is looking to build a comprehensive missile defense. However, further measures will be necessary to respond to a saturated missile attack from China. In addition to increasing the resilience of existing facilities and dispersing them around the country, from the perspective of making the targeting of a Chinese missile attack more difficult, Japan should consider the joint development with the United States, which has withdrawn from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, of a new ground-based intermediate range missile and its deployment to Japan. Ground-based intermediate-range cruise missiles in particular, offer cheap means of delivery, and can easily be controlled remotely, making them suitable for meeting the threat from China's potential missile strength.

In the South China Sea, to boost the MDA capabilities of littoral states, Japan should help

³² Kotani Tetsuo, "Chūgoku to Taiheiyō-gun" (China and the Pacific Command), in Tsuchiya Motohiro, ed. *Amerika Taiheiyō-gun no kenkyū: Indo-Taiheiyō no anzen-hoshō* (Studies on the US Pacific Command: National Security in the India-Pacific) (Tokyo: Chikura Shobō, 2018), pp. 121–140.

³³ For more on this, see Kotani Tetsuo, "Shīrēn bōei: Nichibei dōmei ni okeru 'hito to hito no kyōryoku' no tenkai to sono genkai" (Sea Lane defense: person-to-person exchanges in the US-Japan Alliance, their development and limitations), in *Dōshisha Hōgaku* (Doshisha Law Review), Vol. 58, No. 4 (2006).

³⁴ Interview by the author with US Armed Forces official, March 4, 2019.

these countries to acquire and deploy radar and patrol planes. For this, it would be preferable to cooperate not only with the United States but also with countries like Australia, the United Kingdom, and France. In addition, a maritime monitoring system using satellites is also being considered. This would make it possible to monitor not only the maritime areas around Japan but global maritime areas including the South China Sea in real time.³⁵ Rather than relying on satellites alone, this should be made into a more comprehensive system using a variety of sensors, including ocean buoys, and reconnaissance planes and unmanned patrol aircraft operated from littoral states. Japan should also cooperate with the United States, Australia, and India to boost the anti-submarine capabilities of littoral states, to make it easier to monitor Chinese submarines in the Lombok and Sunda Straits. Drills and exercises with Indonesia to improve operational ability against submarines would also be effective. To prepare for the contingency of a high-end conflict in the South China Sea, exercises should be carried out based on the assumption of US-Japan cooperation, with the SDF providing rear-area and other logistical support in the event of a “situation that will have an important influence on Japan’s peace and security.”

On China’s port developments in the island nations of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Japan should carry out strategic port visits in cooperation with the United States and other friendly nations, as well as providing economic assistance to littoral states that are in danger of falling into the “debt trap.” The Solomon Islands bent to Chinese pressure, breaking off diplomatic relations with Taipei and recognizing Beijing, but when a provincial government tried to lease an island to China for 75 years, the central government stepped in and rendered the deal invalid.³⁶ This example shows that there are countries receiving Chinese aid that fear the debt trap, and illustrates the need to assist vulnerable littoral nations. In cooperation with the United States and Australia, Japan should strengthen its presence in the Sulu and Celebes Seas that link China with the island nations of the Pacific, and at the same time should also strengthen its maritime security cooperation with nations like the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

Finally, to maintain the maritime order based on the law of the sea, as well as working to establish the FOIP on a firm footing, it will be important not to accept any double standards from China regarding its interpretations of maritime law. In the East China and South China Seas, China limits the freedom of navigation and overflight rights of other nations through its own distinctive interpretations of international law, but in the Indian and Pacific Oceans enjoys navigation rights based on the law of the sea. The United States is carrying out freedom of navigation operations, and exercising its own rights within the bounds allowed by international law, and is thus resisting China’s excessive jurisdictional claims. Other maritime states including Australia, France, and the United Kingdom have also started to undertake similar operations. Japan has been increasing the presence of the Maritime Self-Defense Force in the South China Sea, but should also undertake operations in more sensitive maritime areas too. In particular, given that China is increasing its activities in the East China Sea based on its own claims there, Japan likewise needs to exercise its rights of navigation in the waters around the Paracels and Spratlys and also in the Taiwan Strait, to demonstrate clearly that it does not accept Chinese double standards, in the event of a Chinese intrusion into Japanese territorial waters or other unacceptable acts in waters adjacent to Japan.

³⁵ Headquarters for Ocean Policy, Cabinet Office, “Wagakuni no kaiyō jōkyō haaku no nōryoku kyōka ni muketa torikumi no gaiyō” (A summary of measures to strengthen Japan’s ability to gather intelligence on maritime conditions and developments), Minutes from the fifteenth meeting of the Headquarters for Ocean Policy, July 26, 2016, https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/kaiyou/dai15/shiryō1_1.pdf.

³⁶ “Soromon-shotō no shima marugoto chintai, Chūgoku kigyō no keiyaku wa ‘mukō’ genchi seifu” (Local government in Solomon Islands declares contract to lease entire island to Chinese company “null and void”), *AFP*, October 25, 2019, <https://www.afpbb.com/articles/-/3251380>.

Conclusion

This paper discussed several issues that need to be addressed in response to Chinese forays into the Indian and Pacific Oceans. In the Pacific, China has come a considerable way to improving its A2/AD capacity, but in the Indian Ocean, China's navy is still relatively weak. However, China is aiming to complete its modernization of its armed forces by 2035, and looks to become the world's leading power by the middle of this century. Sooner or later, it will surely look to strengthen and augment its military power in the Indian Ocean too. For this reason, from a long-term perspective, it will be necessary to force China to divide its military spending between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, to prevent it from becoming too strong in either sphere. To this end, Japan needs to deepen strategic discussions with the United States, India, Australia, the United Kingdom, France, ASEAN, and other countries.

Pacific Islands: A Regional Edifice for Japan and India's Collective Footprint

Monika Chansoria*

Abstract

The rapidly transient politico-strategic developments across the Indo-Pacific are witnessing its regional architecture getting challenged by virtue of capacity constraints, alternative forms of regionalism and security, new versions of “aid” paradigms and the far-reaching implications of them all. Despite their limited national landmass, the Pacific Island nations have huge exclusive economic zones (EEZ) and remain an important route for transporting products and natural resources. The Pacific Islands being an important partner in the regional maritime paradigm provides India and Japan with a “Third Regional Avenue” following South Asia and Africa, in providing cooperative security and collaborating towards its sustainable growth and development. This would not only be beneficial to limit the overwhelming detrimental impact of “influence aid,” but also provide viable and tangible alternatives to accentuate bilateral benefits and reciprocity as a model case. Japan and India need to focus on specialized projects while responding to the needs of the Pacific Islands. A robust and targeted approach focusing on niche projects tailored to the interests of the Pacific Islands would be ideal. The fields of joint exploration and research for access to deep-sea minerals and renewable energy initiatives should be of congruent interests to both Japan and India. This consequently falls in line with the vision to create a free and open Indo-Pacific region linking the African continent with India and countries in South, Southeast Asia, and Oceania via sea corridors.

The rapidly transient politico-strategic developments across the Indo-Pacific are witnessing its regional architecture getting challenged by virtue of capacity constraints, alternative forms of regionalism and security, new versions of “aid” paradigms and the far-reaching implications of them all. By and large, it will be these determinants that are likely to place the Indo-Pacific region at a crossroads. A pertinent question thus arising is: Is the contemporary aid paradigm being put in place [by China] seemingly driven by the donor’s national interests? This is being reinterpreted often as “influence aid” that is fast taking over the Pacific Islands. Going by statistics, the answer is tilting rapidly towards an affirmative yes—thus calling out regional players/stakeholders to balance out the phenomenon. Rise of the Chinese influence and involvement in the Pacific Islands became noteworthy during the decade of the 2000s, following the previous phase [1980s and 1990s], when Japan was, in fact, the second-highest donor for the region.

A decade later, the field was teeming with China, Russia, and the Middle Eastern countries—thereby witnessing a relative decline in Japanese aid. The top most priority for the Pacific Islands remains the dual demand for infrastructure and poverty alleviation. Nations including Japan and India need to focus on specialized projects while responding to the needs of the Pacific Islands.

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A robust and targeted approach focused on niche projects tailored to the interests of the Pacific Islands would be ideal. This would not only be beneficial to limit the overwhelming detrimental impact of “influence aid,” but also provide viable and tangible alternatives to accentuate bilateral benefits and reciprocity as a model case.

Developmental Challenges of Smaller Island Nations: Case of the Pacific

Despite their limited national landmass, the Pacific Island nations have huge exclusive economic zones (EEZ) and remain an important route for transporting products and natural resources. Japan's imports from Australia¹ and its exports to Australia and New Zealand pass through this sea area—thereby underlining the vitality of maintaining stability in the region.

Socio-economic developmental problems are extensive when an island associated with its smallness and isolation is located at international borders. By far, Australia remains the largest donor to the Pacific Islands, with Japan falling in the third place, just behind New Zealand. Tokyo is not alone in seeking to shore up its influence in the Pacific Island region, with both Australia and New Zealand too having announced increased aid to the Pacific Islands in their most recent fiscal budgets. However, noteworthy, is China becoming an increasingly important source of financial aid and assistance to these island nations in recent years. The growing engagement of Beijing in the region raises concerns. This is primarily due to the nature of financial assistance provided, much of which comes in the form of concessional loans, rather than aid grants favored by Japan, Australia and New Zealand.²

Australia's International Development Minister, Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, warned in January 2018 about the ability of some Pacific Islands to repay their debts to China. According to the Lowy Institute in Australia, China has provided around US \$1.8 billion in financial assistance (including concessional loans) to the region. Tonga, Vanuatu, Samoa and Papua New Guinea have all borrowed significant sums from China in recent years, often raising apprehension that Beijing could use the debt owed by the cash-strapped Pacific Islands to its strategic advantage³ at any given point. This is particularly relevant for debt related to important infrastructure such as ports, which could be put to use for military purposes.⁴

It is well documented that small island economies with limited resources and markets do not necessarily mean low per capita income economies.⁵ They, on the contrary, are richer than many big developing economies. For instance, the per capita incomes of Hawaii, Guam, and Okinawa are higher than the average per capita income of the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries.⁶ Guam—one of the region's small islands has been enjoying the highest per capita income in the South Pacific. The Caribbean Islands of Bermuda, Cayman and the British Virgin Islands enjoy the highest per capita income in the world with booming offshore banking businesses. The size of land area and population are not consistently related to the level of per capita income.⁷ A case in point is Papua New Guinea, the largest island

¹ Australia supplies almost half of the iron ore, coal, and raw cotton that Japan imports.

² “Japan deepens its commitment to the Pacific Islands,” *The Economist*, June 11, 2018.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Hiroshi Kakazu, *Island Sustainability: Challenges and Opportunities for Okinawa and Other Pacific Islands in a Globalized World*, (Victoria, Canada: Trafford Publishing, 2007), pp. 15–33.

⁶ Hiroshi Kakazu, “Challenges and Opportunities for Japan's Remote Islands,” *Eurasia Border Review*, vol. 2, no. 1, Summer 2011.

⁷ Ibid.

in the South Pacific, although its per capita income is the lowest in the region.⁸

The ongoing trends of Japan, i.e., globalization, decentralization (or greater regional autonomy through localization), rural depopulation, a knowledge-based and environmentally conscious society could be push factors for the future course of island societies if appropriate policy and strategies are adopted and put to practice.⁹ Despite the new opportunities it brings, globalization is feared by many islanders because it exposes local workers and small enterprises to global competition. Globalization and localization should not be traded off against each other, instead should be considered essential and complementary factors for the islands' future growth and development.¹⁰ Without efficient and value-added use of location factors such as labor, niche technologies, culture and natural resources, the local economy is unlikely to withstand the tides of changes brought about by globalization. Undoubtedly the urgency of integrating national as well as island economies into the international economy shall be heightened in the coming decades.¹¹

Japan and Pacific Islands:

A Model for Highlighting “Bilateral Benefits and Reciprocity”

When the former South Pacific Forum (SPF) was renamed Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) in November 2000, Japan was among many that attended the Post Forum Dialogues held between the Pacific Island nations and non-member countries, since 1989, even before the renaming—underscoring that regional support for peace and security in the region is flowing by means of existing regional mechanisms such as the Biketawa Declaration. Besides, the chairman of the PIF continues to be invited to Tokyo annually for constructive talks with involvement of the Pacific Islands Centre (PIC) in Tokyo. The PIC is jointly run and hosted by Japan since it was established in October 1996 with the primary objective of the set-up being that of assisting the Forum Islands Countries (FICs) in achieving sustainable economic development through the promotion of trade, investment and tourism. During the recently concluded Second Japan-PIF Policy Dialogue held at Tokyo in March 2019, the need for promoting cooperation between Japan and PIF in the Asia-Pacific was highlighted, especially in the field of maritime security, climate change and fisheries.

It is often perceived that the Pacific Island nations are in a one-way relationship vis-à-vis Japan, where the latter exists to assist the Pacific Islands with their limitations.¹² The contrarian view to the above makes the argument that although the primary objectives of enhancing and stimulating economic growth, sustainable development, and security, for the Pacific Island nations, Japan has also been supporting ongoing efforts towards developing robust monitoring, control and surveillance regimes for sustainable and effective management.¹³

Tokyo appears determined to deepen its commitment to the Pacific Islands by increasing support given their vast development needs as part of its official Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy (FOIP) that seeks to promote the rule of law and freedom of navigation in the region. The aim of the strategy, first mooted by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2016, has been to broaden the scope of Japan's foreign policy with a focus on improving connectivity between Asia and Africa through a free and open Indo-Pacific. Key motivations behind the strategy include raising Japan's profile in the Indo-Pacific region, amid competition and assertiveness

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Kaitu'u 'I Pangai Funaki and Yoichiro Sato, “Wanted: a strategic dialogue with Pacific island countries,” *The Japan Times*, January 28, 2019.

¹³ Ronni Alexander, “Japan and the Pacific Island Countries,” *Revue Juridique Polynésienne*, 2001, pp. 164–175.

especially regarding territorial claims.¹⁴ The FOIP makes a direct reference of the Pacific people as guardians of the ocean through their Pacific Ocean identity¹⁵—the reference was welcomed by the Pacific Island leaders by means of issuing a joint declaration. The name accorded to the 2000 Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting Initiative was “Frontier Diplomacy”—proclaiming thereby that Japan identifies the oceans and space as the last frontier.¹⁶ In this reference, the Pacific, really, is the last frontier for Japan.

Japan is among the traditional four major bilateral donors to the Pacific Island nations, along with Australia, New Zealand and the US. The Pacific Islands’ perception of their relationship with Japan being unidirectional has been long-standing with Japan taking the initiative to develop its relationship with the Pacific Islands as a group through the establishment of the summit-level Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM) in 1997. Ever since, Tokyo has been hosting the PALM summit, every three years. The Fifth PALM summit was crucial in underpinning of economic and marine resource linkages and maintaining close, constructive and mutually beneficial relations with nations lying in the Pacific region.¹⁷ In the context of addressing the unique challenges facing the Pacific Island nations, the Leaders of Japan and the PIF underlined the importance of promoting human security, with a particular focus on capacity-building to ensure greater access to health, education, clean water supplies and bolstering food security.¹⁸

The Pacific Islands Forum calls for development of sustainable economies in the region, by asking for assistance in growth of key economic sectors, transport, telecommunications infrastructure, shipping and aviation. Held exactly a decade ago in 2009, the Fifth PALM summit had stressed upon the importance of infrastructure development, noting that infrastructure was vital in establishing the foundation for productive industries and commercial activities, keeping in mind the particular needs of Smaller Island States.¹⁹ In the sector of infrastructure particularly, development of airports, roads, bridges, harbors and the provision of passenger and cargo vessels, as well as technical cooperation for the operation and maintenance of vessels and port facilities was highlighted.

The Eighth PALM summit, held in Fukushima in May 2018 was co-chaired by Japan’s Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, and the Prime Minister of Samoa, Tuila’epa Sa’ilele Malielegaoi. The summit was attended by representatives from 18 other countries, including Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu, while the French overseas territory of New Caledonia attended for the first time, having become a full member of the Pacific Islands Forum (the main regional body) in 2016.²⁰ During the summit, Japan declared the FOIP strategy as a cornerstone of its foreign relations with the Pacific Islands in reference to the development of human and non-human infrastructure.²¹

¹⁴ *The Economist*, n. 2.

¹⁵ Funaki et al., n. 12.

¹⁶ *Gaiko Forum*, May 2000, no. 141.

¹⁷ “PALM 5: Islanders’ Hokkaido Declaration, 22–23 May 2009,” Press Release, Embassy of Japan in Fiji Islands.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *The Economist*, n. 2.

²¹ The PALM Summit is considered the main venue for Japan to hold dialogue with leaders of the Pacific Islands and its members include Japan, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Maritime Fulcrum of Japan and the Pacific Islands

Unsurprisingly, maritime security remains the fulcrum of key discussions involving the Pacific Island nations and the Pacific Island leaders expressed their commitment to a “free, open and sustainable maritime order based on the rule of law in the Pacific.”²² PALM also expressed support for Japan’s commitment to economic cooperation and development in the Pacific region by means of the FOIP initiative. The leaders also signaled their intention to “pursue the possibility of greater defense and security exchanges and co-operation.” According to the PALM communiqué, FOIP comprises three strands:

- Promotion and establishment of the rule of law and freedom of navigation;
- Pursuit of economic prosperity through strengthened connectivity; and
- Commitment to peace and stability, with cooperation in the fields of maritime safety and disaster risk reduction.

As part of this strategy, Abe announced a new initiative to strengthen the maritime law-enforcement capacity of the Pacific Islands. The scheme will include personnel training and closer cooperation on vessel surveillance and control, as part of a clampdown on illegal fishing, which deprives Pacific Islands’ governments, the much-needed revenue and threatens sustainability of fish stocks.²³ Besides, 2019 is also the year of Japan hosting, for the first time ever, a three-week-long seminar for capacity-building against ship-to-ship transferring of illicit cargo, and inviting maritime officers from 14 the Pacific Island nations to University of South Pacific in Fiji. In addition, it was agreed to expand the scope of trade between Japan and the Pacific Islands with increased Japanese investments in the region.²⁴ Specifically, Prime Minister Abe held multiple bilateral meetings with individual Pacific Island leaders which saw the announcement for financial assistance for disaster risk reduction projects in Vanuatu, Fiji and Papua New Guinea. More specifically, some significant pronouncements included:

- ¥ 3.5 billion in proposed funding for port development in Samoa;
- ¥ 4.4 billion for improvements to the Honiara Airport in the Solomon Islands; and
- ¥ 2.8 billion grant for Tonga to develop a wireless natural disaster early-warning system.²⁵

India’s Engagement with the Pacific Islands:

So Far, Yet, So Near

While the geographies of India and the Pacific Islands might seem very divergent from each other, in reality, India with its 7,500 km long coastline, around 1,000 small islands nurtured by monsoon rains and Himalayan glaciers holds a lot in common with the Pacific Island nations. India is, and has always been, a maritime country.²⁶ It is for this reason that the reach of India’s civilization has extended to much of Southeast Asia—the near neighbourhood for both India, and the Pacific Islands.²⁷

The issues faced by the Pacific Island nations have consistently shaped India’s policy towards

²² *Communiqué*, The Eighth PALM Summit Leaders’ Declaration, Iwaki, Fukushima, 18–19 May 2018, Japan.

²³ *The Economist*, n. 2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Keynote Address*, Minister of State for External Affairs, India-Pacific Islands Sustainable Development Conference, Suva, May 25, 2017.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

the region, which has been in the form of aid, grants, soft loans, and capacity-building over the past decades, although at a modest level.²⁸ It has been said that India's relationship with the Pacific Islands has, at times, been adrift. The cooperation should have been much stronger than it was. As the "Indo-Pacific" concept gained in geostrategic importance, and the "Act East" policy of India became more results-oriented and pragmatic, the relationship between India and the Pacific Island nations became sharper and focused.²⁹ Addressing the "adrift" deficit precisely, India has, of late, begun working towards renewing its old relationships and laying foundations for strong partnerships in the future. While addressing the 2018 Shangri La Dialogue, Prime Minister Narendra Modi recalled India's push for its "Act East" policy initiative with a new phase of engagement with the Pacific Island nations. This initiative was one among many other significant measures including a robust set of exchanges and visits across the Indo-Pacific region.³⁰ An unusual element of PM Modi's Indo-Pacific outreach was the November 2014 visit to Fiji in the Pacific Islands where he addressed the Fijian Parliament and led India in the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting. Modi became the first Indian prime minister, and the first world leader to address the Fijian Parliament. Prior to Modi, it was former Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who visited the Pacific Islands in 1981.³¹

India is working towards becoming a close partner of the Pacific Islands and collaborates closely to advance the developmental agenda of the Pacific Island nations. New Delhi assesses this region to having unlimited potential in an interconnected world.³² The fortune of the two regions is linked to two oceans—the Indian and the Pacific. Oceans are critical to the future and there is a huge potential for cooperation in this area. In the 21st century, oceans have once again reclaimed their role as vital drivers of growth and economies.³³ Besides trade, oceans remain a source of clean energy, food security, climate regulating factors, medicines, etc. At the same time, it is essential to utilize their bounty sustainably—for which ongoing in-depth discussions on *blue economy* shed more light on the solutions and progress achieved in this area.

Gone are the days when nations thought of each other as distant lands separated by oceans and seven time zones. Today, fiber optic cables and satellite links have rendered distance parameters nearly irrelevant.³⁴ For instance, the divergence between India and Fiji begins with the thousands of oceanic miles, and the fact that India is a nation of more than a billion whilst Fiji a nation of a million. These notwithstanding, what unites the two countries are democracy, commitment to liberty, dignity and rights of every individual amid diversity of societies.³⁵ Among the Pacific Islands, Fiji has used its economic resources well and remains a strong voice on behalf of the region. Amid expanding defense and security cooperation, including assistance in defense training and capacity-building owing to shared interests in peace and cooperation in the inter-linked ocean regions, some of the important announcements made by PM Modi at the Fijian Parliament were as follows:³⁶

²⁸ Anil Wadhwa, "India and the South Pacific," Institute of South Asian Studies, *ISAS Insights*, Singapore, no. 562, April 29, 2019.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Prime Minister Narendra Modi's *Keynote Address*, Shangri La Dialogue, June 1, 2018.

³¹ Satu Limaye, "India-South Pacific/Fiji relations," available at <http://cc.pacforum.org/2015/01/acting-east-prime-minister-modi/>

³² India-Pacific Islands Sustainable Development Conference, n. 26.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Address to the Fiji Parliament, *Speeches & Statements*, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, November 19, 2014.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

- A Parliament library
- Grant of US \$ 5 million to strengthen and modernize Fiji's village, small-scale and medium-scale industries
- Provide a Line of Credit of US \$ 70 million for establishment of a co-generation power plant at Rarawai Sugar Mill. This will expand the scope of bilateral cooperation in the sugar sector by enhancing value addition and addressing climate change concerns
- Provide another Line of Credit of US \$ 5 million for upgrading the sugar industry in Fiji³⁷

India's cooperation with the Pacific Islands remains focused on strengthening the small- and medium-scale industries which are the source of enterprise and employment. Agriculture supports a majority of the population in India and the Pacific Islands, and palpably therefore, India has extended its expertise and assistance in increasing productivity in the agriculture sector, amid other trade and investment initiatives in areas such as fisheries, textiles, and precious stones and gems. Besides, India is to set up a centre of excellence in information technology in Fiji in order to equip and integrate Fiji into the global information technology network.

India and the Pacific Islands Leaders' Meeting

Serving as a vital hub for stronger Indian engagement with the Pacific Islands, Fiji rightly proved the platform for the first ever interaction between India and Pacific Islands in 2014. During this meeting, India announced its hope to become a close partner of the Pacific Islands and work towards advancing the region's development priorities. This includes establishing a trade office in India and exploring new ideas for strengthening a mutually beneficial economic chart. India also signed several Memoranda of Understanding with the Pacific Island nations namely Fiji, Cook Islands, Nauru, Samoa and Niue to deepen co-operation in the field of information technology and renewable energies. Some of the vital announcements made by New Delhi include:

- Setting up of a Special Adaptation Fund of US \$ 1 million, by means of which, India would provide technical assistance and training for capacity-building to its Pacific Island partners
- *Pan Pacific Islands Project*
 - Given the distances between islands and poor connectivity, e-networks are an effective means for coordination. In keeping with the success achieved in the pan-Africa Project, India's proposal to develop the Pan Pacific Islands Project will benefit tele-medicine and tele-education
- *Increase in Grant-in-Aid to the Pacific Island nations*
 - Increasing the annual Grant-in-Aid to US \$ 200,000 provided to each Pacific Island country for community projects selected by each recipient nation. This would be rolled over annually³⁸
- *Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC)*
 - Perhaps the most outstanding initiative has been that of establishing the FIPIC that has bridged the geographical distances through shared interests and action
 - The FIPIC-I summit was held in November 2014 in Suva, Fiji, followed by the FIPIC-II summit held in August 2015 in Jaipur, India.

India and Pacific Islands' Sustainable Development

In keeping with the growing ties between the Pacific Island nations and India, a sustainable development conference for the Pacific Islands was organized in May 2017 in Suva, Fiji. Held

³⁷ MOUs signed between India and Fiji during the visit of Prime Minister to Fiji, November 19, 2014.

³⁸ Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks, *Pacific Island Leaders Meeting*, November 19, 2014.

under the aegis of the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation,³⁹ the conference focused on environmental threats and challenges (climate change) facing the small island developing states so as to foster cooperation and collective action. The need to encourage formation of region-wide strategic policies to mitigate and adapt to climate change was highlighted. Interacting with the Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF), the Indian expertise was made available through its key partner institutions including, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). The focus of the conference was on subjects including *blue economy*, adaptation-mitigation practices for climate change, disaster preparedness, health, the International Solar Alliance as well as finding practical solutions to Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) implementation.⁴⁰

Common Objectives: Climate Change and Renewable Energies

The health of the oceans, in many ways, is synonymous with the health of planet Earth. Oceans offer a fulcrum for the next stage of shared, and thus, sustainable growth.⁴¹ India commitment to Small Islands Developing States is instrumental for a sustainable future. Facing the searing impact of climate change, New Delhi is spending more than six percent of its economy's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in adapting to environmental consequences. India has chalked out a comprehensive national plan and strategy to mitigate and adapt to climate change. In the said reference, an essential area to be concentrated upon is renewable energies, especially solar and wind energy. Work on a solar energy project with the Pacific Islands at the community level has been initiated by India for which the regional hubs will be developed in the Pacific Islands. A Memorandum of Understanding between Ministry of New and Renewable Energy of the Government of the Republic of India and Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport of the Government of the Republic of Fiji on Co-operation in the field of Renewable Energy has been signed as part of the concrete actions undertaken to create a sustainable world.

Moreover, India has also embarked upon a partnership project with partners from the Pacific Islands—including Kiribati, Nauru, Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Tonga, Solomon Islands and Cook Island—in association with the UN Office for South-South Cooperation. This is the first time that India has entered into a triangular cooperation partnership with the UN with fellow developing countries—in tune with its commitment to South-South Cooperation and the spirit of global partnership embodied in the SDG17 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.⁴² This project aims at strengthening capacities in terms of sharing data that could be used for monitoring climate change, early warning systems, disaster risk reduction management, and resource management for the Pacific Island nations.

India's Mars Mission: The Fiji Connect

Harnessing the potential of Space technology for governance, economic development, conservation, climate change and natural disasters is a global common. The Pacific Islands hold a special place in India's journey to Mars, following the decision by Fiji to host Indian space program scientists in Fiji for tracking India's Mars Mission, named *Mangalyaan* following its

³⁹ Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation was created in 2014 during the visit of PM Narendra Modi to the Pacific Islands in order to deepen cooperation between India and the 14 the Pacific Island nations.

⁴⁰ India-Pacific Islands Sustainable Development Conference, n. 26.

⁴¹ Speech by Minister of State for External Affairs at the launch of India-UN Development Partnership Fund for Pacific Islands, New York, June 08, 2017.

⁴² Ibid.

launch. It is globally acknowledged that India made history by becoming the only country in the world to succeed reaching Mars in the first attempt. In the digital age, every nation can be part of the global information technology industry. Closer engagement in areas like Space technology applications will remain a critical avenue. Keeping in line with this vision, the Indian Space Research Organization announced its plan to open a new space research and satellite monitoring station on the Fiji Islands. Presently, India relies on the US and Australia for assistance in monitoring its satellites over the Pacific.⁴³ Establishing a monitoring station in Fiji would be a major breakthrough for India's space program, providing it with an independent satellite-tracking capacity.⁴⁴

Conclusion

"Broad-based diplomacy in Asia" is often discussed and debated within Tokyo's policymaking circles wherein it's argued that the major challenge for Japan-India relations going forward will be to find avenues through which the two countries can elevate their ties to newer levels. India and Japan should reassert their involvement and influence in the Pacific Islands region through combined efforts that are likely to provide alternative options for funding to critical infrastructure projects in the Pacific Islands. The presence of Japan and India is likely to maintain pressure on other players to conform to international best practices regarding foreign aid and investment.⁴⁵ Aimed largely to propel growth and investment, infrastructure projects such as building institutional, industrial, and transport corridors shall be a boon for better integration of the Pacific Islands' economies in the long term. Japan's expertise in providing quality infrastructure and state-of-the-art technology should be a clincher in this case, coupled with India's emphasis on infrastructure to further propel India's economy—especially by attracting investment in industry and manufacturing to support the "Make in India" campaign and infrastructure.

The Modi-Abe leadership combine exhibits showmanship, content, and cognitive consistency by means of converging themes of nationalism, coupled with motivated eagerness to initiate action driven towards ushering in an era of policy-oriented change, both domestically, and regionally. Signing the Japan-India Vision Statement in Tokyo on 29 October 2018, the Prime Ministers of Japan and India reviewed cooperation on development of connectivity via quality infrastructure and capacity-building carried out bilaterally, as well as, with other partners. More so, the need to do this in an open, transparent and non-exclusive manner based on international standards, responsible debt financing practices, and in alignment with local economic and development strategies and priorities was highlighted.⁴⁶ Modi and Abe's call for greater cooperation to promote entrepreneurship and collaborative infrastructure development in third-party countries namely Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and others in Southeast Asia and Africa are fine examples of their decisional latitude.⁴⁷ Pacific Islands provide them another avenue for exercising equitable and reciprocal collaborative mechanisms.

An increasingly globalized and networked cyber world calls for more and more reliance on international joint ventures, strategic relationships, and information-sharing partnerships.

⁴³ "India to Set Up Space Research and Satellite Monitoring Station in Fiji," *Space Daily*, August 21, 2015.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ *The Economist*, n. 2.

⁴⁶ Monika Chansoria, "Development of Sri Lanka's East Container Terminal Port: Japan & India's Regional Cooperation in South Asia Shaping Up," *Policy Brief*, The Japan Institute of International Affairs, June 28, 2019; also see, *Japan-India Vision Statement*, Tokyo, October 29, 2018.

⁴⁷ For more details see, Monika Chansoria, "India-Japan Relations under Modi and Abe: Prospects and Challenges for a Novel Bilateral Asian Dynamic," *India Foundation Journal*, vol. VII, no. 3, May-June 2019.

Investments in hard and tangible infrastructures such as roads, bridges, ports, monumental buildings, etc., to investments in soft infrastructures such as human resource development and information networking, are crucial as well as urgent in achieving the true ends of development.⁴⁸ Instead of a propensity for informing the Pacific Island nations of policies impacting or involving them, there is a need for tangible attempts to co-create such policies. It has been observed that many the Pacific Island nations have reached a point of endangering their strategic autonomy owing to heavy debts incurred from China.

In Africa, the Indo-Japanese proposed Asia-Africa Growth Corridor holds promise for collaborative progress and benefits. In South Asia, the May 2019 decision to jointly develop Sri Lanka's East Container Terminal of the Colombo Port is a vital step in the said direction.⁴⁹ The potential for New Delhi and Tokyo to establish a stronger collective footprint in South Asia and Africa remains huge. Asia's present geopolitical and geostrategic setting makes it nearly obligatory for two of its most prominent and responsible powers, India and Japan, to step forward and stabilize the balance of power and provide a platform for collaborative and sustainable development for the Pacific Islands. The Pacific Islands being an important partner in the regional maritime paradigm provide India and Japan with a "Third Regional Avenue" following South Asia and Africa, in providing cooperative security and collaborating towards its sustainable growth and development. The fields of joint exploration and research for access to deep-sea minerals and renewable energy initiatives should be of congruent interests to both Japan and India.⁵⁰ This consequently falls in line with the vision to create a free and open Indo-Pacific region linking the African continent with India and countries in South, Southeast Asia, and Oceania via sea corridors.

⁴⁸ *The Economist*, n. 2.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ In February 2000, an agreement for deep ocean mineral exploration in the EEZs around the Cook Islands, Fiji and Marshall Islands was signed between the mentioned countries, the South Pacific Applied Geo-science Commission, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, and the Mental Mining Agency of Japan; also see, "PALM 2000: Japan-South Pacific Summit," *Pacific News Bulletin*, vol. 15, no. 5, May 2000, pp. 10-11.

The Name “Sea of Japan” Is the Only Internationally Established Name

(The Debate Concerning the Naming of the Sea of Japan —Analysis of the South Korean Government’s Arguments based on Historical Materials and Maps—)

Masao Shimojo*

Abstract

Disagreement about the name of the Sea of Japan has persisted between Japan and South Korea since 1992. The basis for the South Korean assertion that the term “East Sea” has been used for 2000 years to refer to the Sea of Japan is a passage from a work known as *Samguk sagi* (三国史記 , History of the Three Kingdoms) that actually refers to the Yellow Sea, or the East China Sea. References to the East Sea in historical maps such as the *P’alto ch’ongdo* (八道総図 , complete map of the eight provinces) and the *Aguk ch’ongdo* (我国総図 , complete map of Korea) have been distorted by South Korea to support its position. This paper points out the errors in the South Korean interpretation of historical documentation and shows that the term “East Sea” lacks the qualifications to replace the name Sea of Japan. South Korea has repeatedly criticized Japan, alleging that use of the term East Sea was excluded from the International Hydrographic Organization’s 1929 *Limits of Oceans and Seas* because Korea was under Japanese rule at that time and was deprived of the opportunity to assert the legitimacy of the name East Sea. A 1926 newspaper article in the *Dong-A Ilbo* (東亜日報) and the 1915 publication *Painful History of Korea* (韓国痛史) treated the “East Sea” as part of the Sea of Japan because the “East Sea” was then a designation for coastal waters off the Korean Peninsula. Attempts to fabricate history and change the status quo will only cause confusion in the international community and should not be tolerated.

1. Introduction

Disagreement about the name of the Sea of Japan has persisted between Japan and South Korea since the sixth UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN) in 1992. During this time, the Japanese government has consistently maintained that the name “Sea of Japan” is the only internationally established name. The name “East Sea,” which the government of South Korea has insisted on using instead of “Sea of Japan,” has historically referred to only the coastal waters off the Korean Peninsula, not the whole area of the Sea of Japan, and it does not qualify as an alternative to the name “Sea of Japan.”

However, Seoul continues to object to the use of “Sea of Japan” and insist on “East Sea.” This is because the South Korean government, which has occupied the Japanese territory of Takeshima

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(Korean name: Dokdo) since 1954, has associated this territorial issue with the naming of the Sea of Japan. The issue has been taken up diplomatically by the South Korean government.

Part of the South Korean logic for justifying the name “East Sea” is that, if Dokdo (Takeshima) is in the Sea of Japan, then it inappropriately appears as if Dokdo is in Japanese territorial waters. In this regard, the South Korean government has claimed that “East Sea” has been used for 2000 years and should be used instead of “Sea of Japan.”

The basis for the claim that “East Sea” has been used for 2000 years is the phrase “beaches of the East Sea” from the Book of the Sage King *Tongmyǒng* of the *Koguryō*¹ Annals (高句麗本紀始祖東明聖王条) in the *Samguk sagi* (三國史記, History of the Three Kingdoms). The South Korean side also argues that “East Sea” was excluded from the International Hydrographic Organization’s 1929 *Limits of Oceans and Seas*, in spite of the name’s use for 2000 years before that, because Korea was under Japanese rule at that time and thus deprived of the opportunity to assert the legitimacy of the name “East Sea.”

Probably because of a belief that it would be difficult to reach an agreement on using only “East Sea,” Seoul has argued since the 1997 conference of the International Hydrographic Organization that both “Sea of Japan” and “East Sea” should be used simultaneously.

However, as discussed in detail below, the word 東海 (*Donghae*, *Dong* means East and *Hae* means Sea) that appears in the *Samguk sagi*, the *Kwanggaet’o* Stele (廣開土王碑, a stone monument erected in 414), the *P’alto ch’ongdo* (八道總圖, complete map of the eight provinces), the *Aguk ch’ongdo* (我國總圖, complete map of Korea), and other pieces of evidence² that have been identified by the South Korean government do not refer to the Sea of Japan. The word 東海 (*Donghae*) appearing in these pieces only refers to the eastern coastal waters off the Korean Peninsula (not the whole Sea of Japan) or the Yellow Sea or the East China Sea and has nothing to do with the body of water called the Sea of Japan today.

2. “East Sea” in the *Aguk ch’ongdo*

For example, it is true that the *Aguk ch’ongdo* mentions the *Donghae* (East Sea) to the east of the Korean Peninsula, but the western and southern coastal waters off the Korean Peninsula are also indicated as *Seohae* (西海, West Sea) and *Namhae* (南海, South Sea), respectively. *Seohae* is a part of the Yellow Sea and *Namhae* is a part of the East China Sea, so they are names for stretches of the Korean Peninsula’s coastal waters. In light of the South Korean government’s argument that “East Sea” should be used instead of “Sea of Japan,” it would also be natural for Seoul to claim that “Yellow Sea” and “East China Sea” should be replaced with “West Sea” and “South Sea” respectively, but Seoul is making no such demands. The only reason why the South Korean government takes issue with the Sea of Japan is that is where Takeshima (Dokdo) is located.

Moreover, the fact that the East Sea in the *Aguk ch’ongdo* refers to only the stretches of water off the eastern coast of the Korean Peninsula can be verified by the Map of Liaodong and Korea (遼東連朝鮮圖) in the *Haifang zuanyao* (海防纂要, Compilation on Maritime Defenses), compiled by Wang Zaijin of the Ming. There, the western coastal waters off the Korean Peninsula are indicated to be the Korean West Sea (朝鮮西海), the southern coastal waters the Korean South Sea (朝鮮南海), and the eastern coastal waters the Korean East Sea (朝鮮東海). They only mean the coastal waters off the Korean Peninsula. Thus, the South Korean government’s claims that “East Sea” in the *Aguk ch’ongdo* refers to the whole area of the Sea of Japan are nothing other than an arbitrary interpretation of the map.

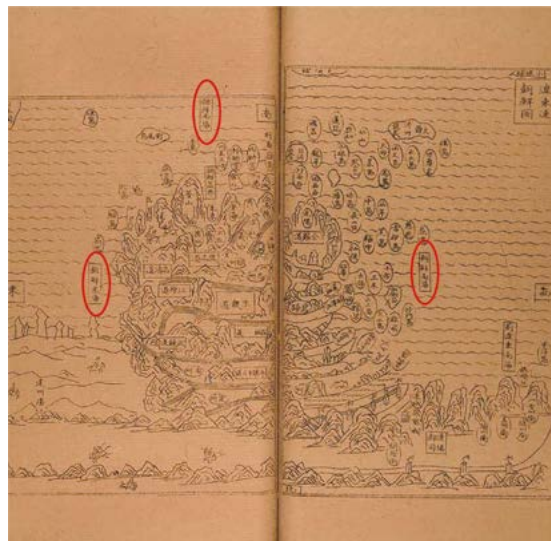
¹ *Koguryō* is one of the three kingdoms whose historical record is compiled in the *Samguk sagi*. It was established in the area north to the Yalu River in the 1st Century BC and expanded its territory to parts of both the Korean Peninsula and northeast China.

² For the views of the South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, see http://www.mofa.go.kr/www/wpge/m_3838/contents.do



***Aguk ch'ongdo* (我国総図, complete map of Korea)**

In the *Aguk ch'ongdo*, in addition to “*Donghae* (東海, East Sea)” to the east of the Korean Peninsula, the western and southern coastal waters off the Korean Peninsula are indicated as “*Seohae* (西海, West Sea)” and “*Namhae* (南海, South Sea),” respectively. In light of the logic by the South Korean government, it should have taken issue with *Seohae* and *Namhae*, too. But it has not done so.



The Map of Liaodong and Korea (遼東連朝鮮図) in the *Haifang zuanyao* (海防纂要, Compilation on Maritime Defenses)

3. The “Beaches of the East Sea” from the *Samguk sagi*

We can see another example of the South Korean government’s arbitrary interpretation of literature in its claims regarding the phrase “beaches of the East Sea” from *Koguryŏ Annals* of the *Samguk sagi*, which is taken as evidence that “East Sea” has been used for 2000 years. The South Korean government does not doubt that *Koguryŏ* is a part of Korean history, but China perceives *Koguryŏ* to be a regional Chinese kingdom. From the perspective of the Chinese, “East Sea” in the phrase “beaches of the East Sea” refers to the Yellow Sea or the East China Sea.

Now, where were the “beaches of the East Sea” located? In the *Samguk sagi*, the phrase “beaches of the East Sea” was used to refer to the area where the Sage King *Tongmyŏng*, the

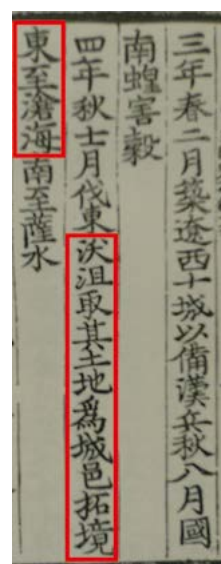
founder of *Koguryō*, moved to establish his new state. If so, we should be able to infer where the East Sea was based on the territory of *Koguryō* at the time of its founding. Looking at information about *Koguryō* in books such as the “Treatise on Geography (地理志)” in the *Hanshu* (漢書, Book of Han), the “Treatise on Geography” in the *Hou Hanshu* (後漢書, Book of the Later Han), and the “Records of Wei: An Account of the Easterners (魏志東夷傳)” in the *Sanguozhi* (三國志, Records of the Three Kingdoms),³ *Koguryō* was founded near the upper reaches of the Yalu River in the 1st Century BC. The area to the east of *Koguryō* was occupied by Eastern *Okchō* (東沃沮). In other words, at the time of its founding, *Koguryō*’s territory was not adjacent to the Sea of Japan.

In fact, according to the *Koguryō Annals* of the *Samguk sagi*, *Koguryō* did not defeat Eastern *Okchō*, expand its territory eastward, and reach the Sea of Japan until the reign of King *Taejo* (太祖), the sixth ruler after the Sage King *Tongmyōng*.⁴ The “East Sea” in the *Samguk sagi*, based on which the South Korean government asserts that the name “East Sea” has been in use since 2000 years ago, was not the Sea of Japan.



Records of Wei: An Account of the Easterners (魏志東夷傳) in the *Sanguozhi* (三國志, Records of the Three Kingdoms)

“Eastern *Okchō* is to the east of the Kaema Mountains in *Koguryō*, by the eastern shore [facing] the great sea.”



The *Koguryō Annals* (高句麗本紀) of the *Samguk sagi* (三國史記, History of the Three Kingdoms)

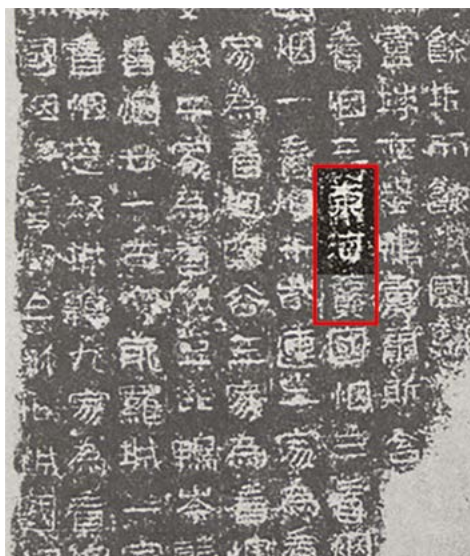
“They attacked Eastern *Okchō*, took their land, towns, and villages, and expanded their borders to the Blue Sea in the east.”

³ According to “an Account of *Koguryō*” of the “Records of Wei: An Account of the Easterners” in the *Sanguozhi*, and “An Account of the Easterners” in the *Hou Hanshu*, “*Koguryō* lies to the east of Liangdong, with Korea and the Yemaek to the south, the *Okchō* to the east, and *Puyō* to the north (高句麗在遼東之東、南與朝鮮、濊貊、東與沃沮、北與夫餘接).” According to “an Account of Eastern *Okchō*” of the “Records of Wei: An Account of the Easterners” in the *Sanguozhi*, “Eastern *Okchō* is to the east of the Kaema Mountains in *Koguryō*, by the eastern shore [facing] the great sea (東沃沮、在高句麗蓋馬大山之東、東濱大海).”

⁴ According to the Record of 7th month in the fall of the 4th year of the reign of King *Taejo* (太祖大王四年秋七月條), *Koguryō Annals*, *Samguk sagi*, “They attacked Eastern *Okchō*, took their land, towns, and villages, and expanded their borders to the Blue Sea in the east (伐東沃沮、取其土地為城邑、拓境東至滄海).”

4. The “*Donghae* Merchants” on the *Kwanggaet'o* Stele

Now, what about the word *Donghae* on the *Kwanggaet'o* Stele, erected in 414? The *Kwanggaet'o* Stele was erected by King *Changsu* (長壽王) of *Koguryō* to extol the accomplishments of his father King *Kwanggaet'o*, so it is inscribed with tomb keepers to protect the tomb of King *Kwanggaet'o* as well as their numbers. Among those keepers were the “*Donghae* Merchants.”⁵ The South Korean government took notice of the word “*Donghae*” in the phrase “*Donghae* Merchants” and assumed that it signified the Sea of Japan.



The “*Donghae* Merchants (東海賈)” on the “*Kwanggaet'o* Stele (広開土王碑, a stone monument erected in 414)”

The South Korean government pays attention to the word “*Donghae* (東海)” in the “*Kwanggaet'o* Stele” and assumed it to signify the Sea of Japan without taking into account the context in which the word *Donghae* was used. The passage around the word *Donghae* on the *Kwanggaet'o* Stele is “Of the *Donghae* merchants, three are *kugyōn* households and five are *kanyōn* households (東海賈國烟三看烟五).” It has nothing to do with the Sea of Japan.

However, the Chinese character “賈” means merchants, therefore the *Donghae* Merchants means only merchants in the place called *Donghae* (東海). It is unclear where *Donghae* was, but it is rather arbitrary to assert that the *Donghae* merchants were merchants in the Sea of Japan without further evidence.

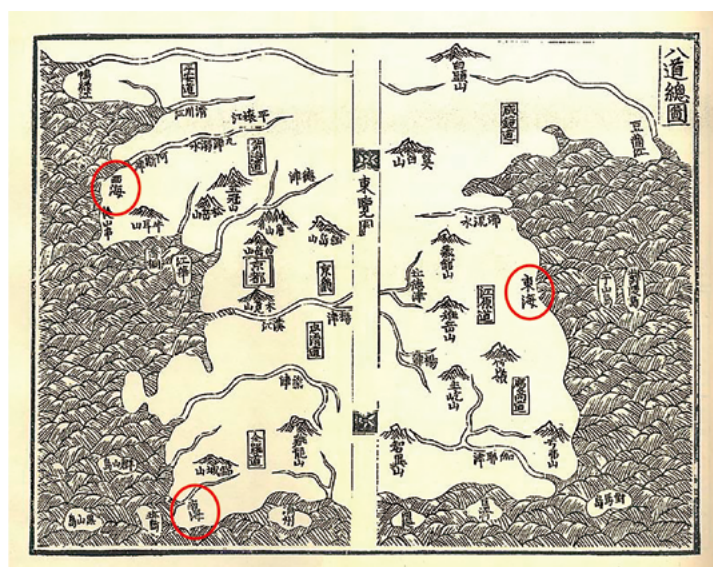
5. The word “*Donghae*” in the *P'alto ch'ongdo*

The South Korean government regards the name “*Donghae*” in the *P'alto ch'ongdo* as the Sea of Japan. Yet this is another distorted interpretation. The *P'alto ch'ongdo* is a map of all of Korea included in the *Tongguk yōji sūngnam* (東國輿地勝覽, Survey of the Geography of Korea). It shows large rivers like the Han River and the Yalu River as well as the names *Donghae*, *Namhae* (南海), and *Seohae* (西海) on the land. Seoul interprets this *Donghae* to mean the Sea of Japan, but this is unfounded speculation, because the afterword of the *Tongguk yōji sūngnam* specifies the following regarding the *P'alto ch'ongdo*:

⁵ The passage around the phrase “*Donghae* Merchants” on the *Kwanggaet'o* Stele that the Korean government has cited as evidence is “Of the *Donghae* merchants, three are *kugyōn* households and five are *kanyōn* households (東海賈國烟三看烟五).”

“The comprehensive map in the beginning of the book (the *P’alto ch’ongdo*) is a record of sacred peaks, famous mountains and large rivers listed in the Ritual Codes (祀典).”

The large rivers and the *Donghae* depicted in the *P’alto ch’ongdo* referred to the locations where state rituals took place as prescribed in the Ritual Codes. In fact, the *Donghae* shown in the *P’alto ch’ongdo* marks the location of the *Donghae Shrine* (東海神祠) in the Yangyang District Section (襄陽都護府条) of the *Tongguk yōji sūngnam*. The *Donghae Shrine* was rebuilt in recent years as the *Donghae Sanctum* (東海神廟)” shown in the photo below, and the *P’alto ch’ongdo*’s *Namhae* was also the *Nanhae Sanctum* (南海神廟). The *Donghae* in the *P’alto ch’ongdo* marked the location of the *Donghae Shrine*, where state rituals took place, as specified in the afterword of the *Tongguk yōji sūngnam*. This *Donghae Shrine* cannot be interpreted to be the Sea of Japan.



The word “*Donghae* (東海)” in the *P’alto ch’ongdo* (八道總圖 , complete map of the eight provinces). The word “*Seohae* (西海)” and “*Namhae* (南海)” are also in this map.



The “*Donghae Sanctum* (東海神廟),” that was rebuilt in recent years



The “*Nanhae Sanctum* (南海神廟)”

Moreover, regarding this *Donghae*, the afterword of the *Tongguk yōji sūngnam* states that “Each map of the eight provinces records the mountains guarding each area as well as its four boundaries.” The maps depicting the administrative divisions bordering on the Sea of Japan, “*Hamgyōng Province* (咸鏡道),” “*Kangwōn Province* (江原道),” and “*Kyōngsang Province* (慶尚道),” all show their “four boundaries (四至四到)” and specify adjacent areas.

At the eastern edges of the maps of “*Hamgyŏng Province*,” “*Kangwŏn Province*,” and “*Kyŏngsang Province*” there is the notation “Great Sea to the east (東抵大海).” This is because, at that time, Koreans differentiated between coastal waters and the open sea, which was called the Great Sea. This distinction between coastal waters and the open sea comes from the fact that the *Tongguk yŏji sŭngnam* was compiled according to the same editorial policy as the *Da-Ming yitong zhi* (大明一統志, Records of the Unity of the Great Ming).

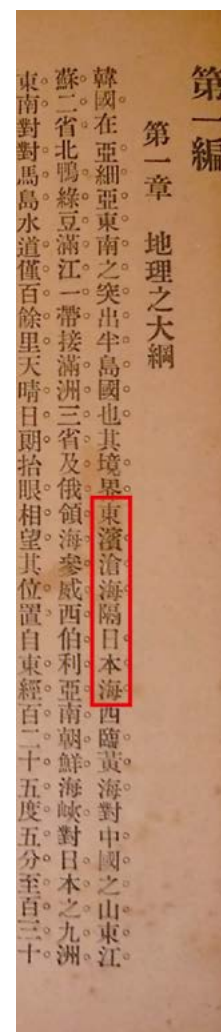
This tradition of differentiating between the two has continued into modern times. Pak Ŭnsik (朴殷植) wrote the following in his *Painful History of Korea* (韓國痛史, published in 1915):

“Korea is a peninsular nation sticking out from southeast Asia. Its borders are the Blue Sea (滄海) and are separated from the Sea of Japan to the east as well as the Yellow Sea facing the two Chinese provinces of Shandong and Jiangsu to the west.”



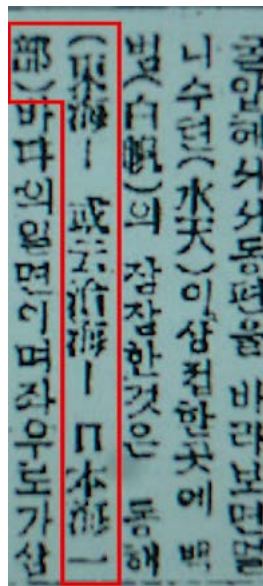
“Kangwŏn Province (江原道)” in the *Tongguk yŏji sŭngnam* (東国輿地勝覽, Survey of the Geography of Korea)

At the eastern edge of the map, there is the notation “Great Sea to the east (東抵大海).”



***Painful History of Korea* (韓國痛史, published in 1915)**

written by Pak Ŭnsik (朴殷植)



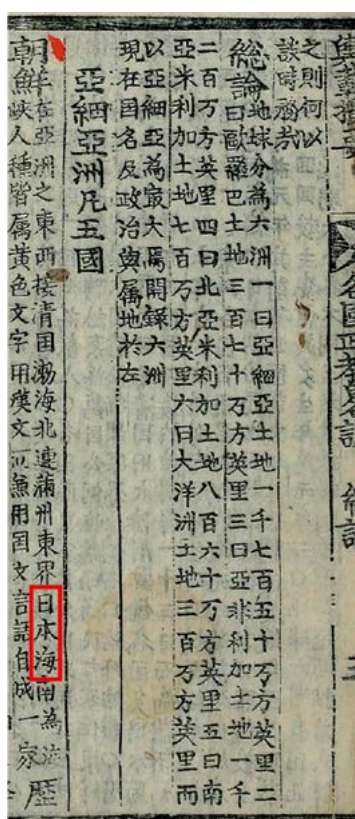
The *Dong-A Ilbo* (東亞日報), dated July 1, 1926

This was fourteen years before the International Hydrographic Organization determined the names of the oceans and seas. This shows that the Blue Sea was considered to be the coastal waters off the Korean Peninsula and the Sea of Japan was considered to be the open sea offshore at that time. This is also indicated by the wording “the East Sea, also known as the Blue Sea, a part of the Sea of Japan” in an article in the *Dong-A Ilbo* (東亞日報), dated July 1, 1926. The South Korean government argues that Korea was unable to assert in 1929 that the name of the sea was the “East Sea” because it was under Japanese colonial rule, but at the time of the Sea of Japan’s inclusion into the *Limits of Oceans and Seas*, “East Sea” was used in Korea as a name for the coastal waters off the Korean Peninsula. It was only after WWII that “East Sea” came to mean the Sea of Japan. The headline of an article in the *Dong-A Ilbo*, dated June 15, 1946, was “East Sea or Sea of Japan?” but that was because the debate about whether to call it the Sea of Japan or the East Sea had just emerged.

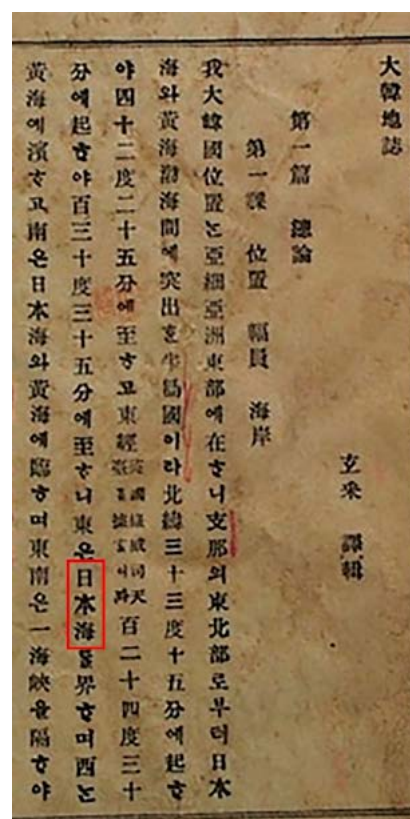
6. The Name “Sea of Japan” was Used also in the Korean Peninsula in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century

Seoul repeatedly argues that the names “Sea of Japan” and “East Sea” should be used side by side because “East Sea” has been used for 2000 years. But it was not until around the mid-twentieth century that the Sea of Japan came to be called the East Sea in the Republic of Korea.

As mentioned above, the Korean patriot Pak Ŭnsik differentiated between the Sea of Japan and the Blue Sea in his *Painful History of Korea*, because the name “Sea of Japan” had been also used on the Korean Peninsula since the second half of the nineteenth century. The *Yŏlchae ch’waryo* (輿載撮要) from 1896 states that Korea “is in eastern Asia. It borders the Bohai Sea of the Qing to the west. It is connected with Manchuria to the north, and is demarcated by the Sea of Japan to the east.” Also the *Tae-Han chiji* (大韓地誌 , Atlas of the Great Korean Empire, published 1899), translated, edited, and compiled by Hyŏn Ch’ae (玄采) of the Korean Empire, states that Korea is “demarcated by the Sea of Japan in the east and the beaches of the Yellow Sea in the west.”



The *Yölchae ch'waryo*
(輿載撮要)



The *Tae-Han chiji* (大韓地誌, Atlas of the Great Korean Empire, published 1899)

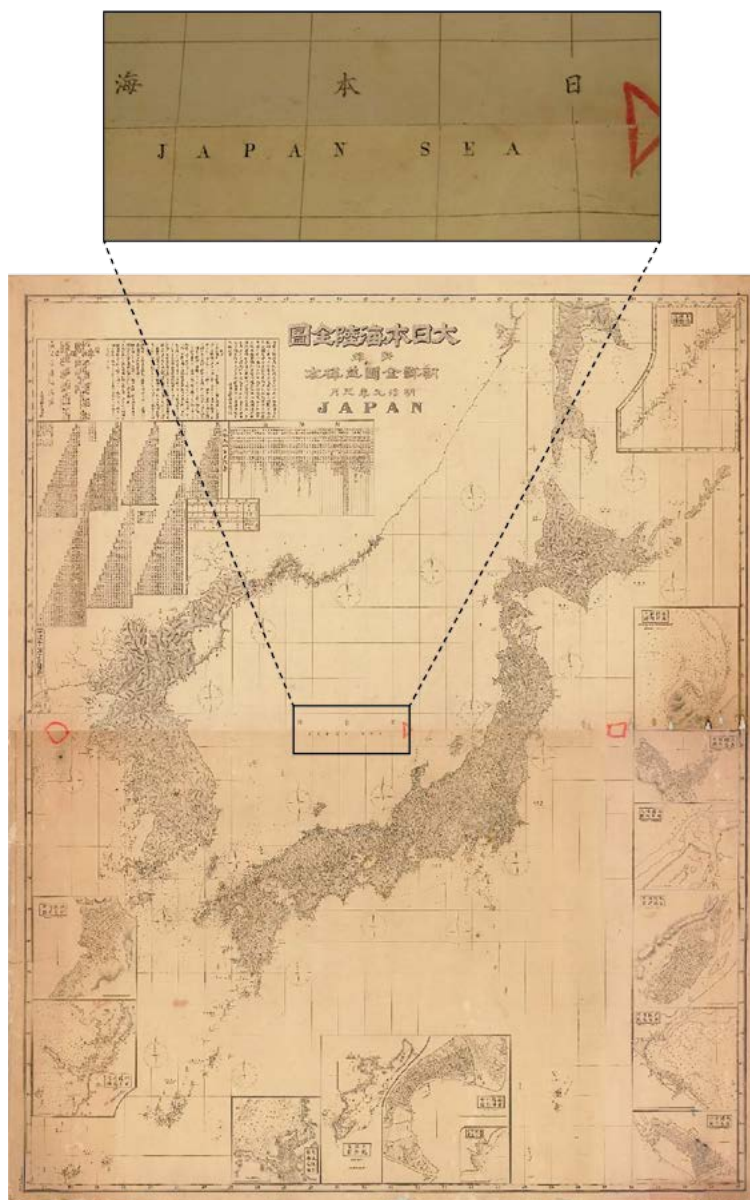
As the South Korean government demands the name “Sea of Japan” be changed to “East Sea,” they emphasize the inappropriateness of “Sea of Japan” in light of Japan’s colonial rule. Yet, “Sea of Japan” was not decided solely by Japan. The *Complete Map of the Land and Sea of Great Japan, Along with Korea and Karafuto* (大日本海陸全圖聯接朝鮮樺太) made in 1876 by Ōjiri Hidekatsu (大後秀勝), a cartographer in the Japanese Navy, also says “日本海 / JAPAN SEA,” but that is because it was drawn based on British sea charts. Subsequently, the *Taiwan suiro shi* (臺灣水路誌, published 1883) and the *Chosen suiro shi* (朝鮮水路誌, published 1894) were also compiled by referring to British nautical charts, maintaining the name “Sea of Japan.”

7. Conclusion

The Japanese government’s statement that “Sea of Japan is the only internationally established name” is based on consideration of the above history. The South Korean emphasis of Japanese colonial rule is totally irrelevant here. Moreover, as I have discussed at length, the word 東海 (*Donghae*) that the South Korean government brings up as evidence in their challenge against the name “Sea of Japan” was either the coastal waters off the Korean Peninsula, names of places on land, the Yellow Sea, or the East Sea of China. We should not refer to the Sea of Japan as the East Sea. It is also inappropriate to use the names “Sea of Japan” and “East Sea” side by side as internationally established names.

Finally, I sincerely hope that the South Korean government is able to realize that its persistence in this naming issue even to the point of distorting historical facts has become a source of confusion in the international community.

The Name “Sea of Japan” Is the Only Internationally Established Name
(The Debate Concerning the Naming of the Sea of Japan
—Analysis of the South Korean Government’s Arguments based on Historical Materials and Maps—)



***The Complete Map of the Land and Sea of Great Japan, Along with
Korea and Karafuto***
(大日本海陸全圖聯接朝鮮樺太) made by Ōjiri Hidekatsu (大後秀勝)

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