

# Differences in Security Strategies between China and Japan and the Diaoyu Islands Dispute in the New Era

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## ABSTRACT

The Diaoyu Islands dispute is an important part of the Sino-Japanese conflict and has a significant negative impact on the development of Sino-Japanese friendly relations. To better maintain the healthy development of Sino-Japanese relations, we need not only to comprehensively analyze the ins and outs of the Diaoyu Islands issue, but also to explore the Diaoyu Islands issue from a macro perspective based on the differences and contradictions in the security strategies of China and Japan, so as to have a deeper understanding of the historical complexity and current difficulties of the Diaoyu Islands issue and thus propose more effective solutions.

## KEYWORDS

Security strategy; Differences; Diaoyu Islands Dispute

## 1. INTRODUCTION

"Strategy" originally originated from war and has a long history of use. Before the 18th century, it generally referred to a set of strategies and tricks used by generals to deceive the enemy and win the war. Later, strategy was widely used in politics, economy, diplomacy and other fields, meaning the art of controlling and utilizing various resources of a country and national alliance, including armed forces, to protect its vital interests from being violated by real, potential or hypothetical enemies [1].

Regarding security, Li Shaojun summarized Arnold Wolfors' definition as objectively no threat, subjectively no fear [2]. It contains both objective status quo and subjective feelings. In addition to traditional security issues, various non-traditional security issues are also becoming increasingly prominent. National security strategy refers to the science and art of a country's mobilization of forces and resources to achieve security goals [3]. National security strategy includes international and domestic levels, and national internal security is an important part of national security strategy [4]. Security strategy is closely related to national interests, and the two are the relationship between means and ends [5].

## 2. ORIGIN OF THE DIAOYU ISLANDS DISPUTE

Diaoyu Islands is located in the East China Sea, about 92 nautical miles from Taiwan Province and about 73 nautical miles from Japan's Okinawa Islands. There is a 1-2 km deep trench between it and Okinawa, which is regarded by China as a natural boundary between it and the Okinawa Islands. It consists of Diaoyu Island, Nanxiao Island, Huangwei Island and surrounding islands and reefs, with a land area of only about 6.344 square kilometers and no permanent population. It is an affiliated island of Taiwan Island.

China first discovered and named the Diaoyu Islands, but in January 1895, before the Treaty of Shimonoseki, the Japanese cabinet decided to forcibly occupy the Diaoyu Islands. The Treaty of Shimonoseki stipulated that China ceded Taiwan and its affiliated islands to Japan, and the Diaoyu Islands were naturally no longer controversial. In 1900, the Japanese government renamed it the "Senkaku Islands", and later it was managed by Okinawa Prefecture and privately controlled by a family. After Japan's defeat in 1945, according to international documents such as the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Proclamation, Taiwan and its surrounding islands belonged to China. However, the Diaoyu Islands were handed over to the United States for custody and were not returned to China. In 1970, the United States "gifted" the Diaoyu Islands to Japan, but proposed to transfer the administrative jurisdiction of the Diaoyu Islands to Japan, which had nothing to do with sovereignty. The sovereignty of the Diaoyu Islands was resolved through negotiations among all relevant parties.

When Chinese government built diplomatic relations with Japanese government in 1972, Premier Zhou Enlai put the ownership of the Diaoyu Islands and other islands on hold for the time being, leaving it for resolution when conditions are ripe in the future. When the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship was signed in 1978, Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping said that the sovereignty dispute should be shelved and the Diaoyu Islands issue should be slowly resolved in the future. In 1992, after China passed the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone Law, which stated that the Diaoyu Islands and other islands were Chinese territory, Japan lodged a "protest", and the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated that the Diaoyu Islands belonged to China. Until 2010, although there were incidents of Japanese youth setting up lighthouses and Japanese interception of Chinese fishing boats, they were properly handled in a relatively rational atmosphere between the two countries, and the dispute over fishing was not very prominent, and the related East China Sea demarcation negotiations were also ongoing.

The farce of purchasing the islands in 2012, the contradictions between China and Japan over the Diaoyu Islands dispute intensified, Sino-Japanese relations took a sharp turn for the worse, high-level exchanges basically stagnated, and the proportion of people in the two countries hating each other reached a new high; large-scale demonstrations against each other took place in both countries. In particular, there was a large-scale boycott of Japanese goods, smashing and destroying Japanese companies and automobiles in China. This hostility was unprecedented since the reform and opening up [6]. In addition, Chinese military aircraft, warships and marine surveillance ships carried out routine patrols on the Diaoyu Islands, and submitted the geographical signs of the Diaoyu Islands to the United Nations to declare sovereignty. Japan also launched large-scale confrontational measures, mobilized heavy troops to the south, and strengthened its armaments. The tense situation in the Diaoyu Islands is in danger of accidental shooting.

Although the Diaoyu Islands are small, they involve national sentiment, geopolitics, resources and energy, Taiwan issues, and other issues that are likely to affect the overall situation of Sino-Japanese relations [7]. The competition and contest between the two major powers, China and Japan, over the Diaoyu Islands can give us a glimpse of the connotation, characteristics, common interests and conflicts of the security strategies of China and Japan in the new era.

### **3. CHINESE SECURITY STRATEGY IN THE NEW ERA**

Chinese national security strategy in the new era is not only a continuation of the security strategy since the founding of the People's Republic of China, but also has obvious characteristics of the times. Fundamentally speaking, national security has always been the coordinate and starting point of China's foreign relations and foreign security strategy [8]. More than 60 years of basic experience has also proved that changes in China's security strategy are more affected by changes in domestic politics, rather than the other way around [9].

The main basis for the formulation of China's security strategy is the most important and fundamental national interests: First, there are long land and sea borders, the country has not yet been fully unified, and there are territorial disputes with several neighboring countries. China needs to prevent foreign aggression and interference, eliminate various unsafe factors, safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and achieve national unity. Second, as a relatively backward and populous developing country, China must always focus on economic construction and building a well-off society in an all-round way. It is necessary to achieve maximum development and have sufficient security guarantees. There is an inseparable relationship between these two needs, that is, seeking security is for development, and achieving development is inseparable from security; but there is a contradiction between priority and sequence, because the implementation of these two strategies involves the allocation of resources and power, and involves the grasp of strategic opportunities [10].

Therefore, since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the main task of foreign relations in the first 30 years was to safeguard sovereignty, security, independence and territorial integrity; while the core task of foreign relations in the next 30 years was to create a good international and surrounding environment and serve domestic economic construction [11]. Specifically, (1) From 1979 to 1991, China's security strategy underwent a fundamental change from "revolution and war" to "peace and development", proposing to maintain limited nuclear counterattack capabilities and subordinate military construction to the overall situation of economic construction. (2) From 1991 to 2001, with the rise of non-traditional security threats such as multipolarization, economic globalization and rapid development of science and technology after the Cold War, and the financial crisis, Chinese leaders elaborated in 2001 on the "new security concept" with "mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation" as the core, breaking through the old framework of the traditional security concept and forming a brand-new thinking and framework. (3) The third stage, from the September 11 incident to the present, China's national strength has increased rapidly, and China's development has become one of the fundamental factors affecting today's international relations and world trends. Therefore, how China will achieve its own rise has attracted close attention from countries around the world, especially Asia-Pacific countries. China has proposed the grand strategy of taking the "path of peaceful development", promoting "harmonious regions" and building a "harmonious world" [12]. (4) The report of the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China further proposed: resolutely safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests and achieving sustainable security. Its basic connotation is: through comprehensive security, cooperative security and common security, try to achieve and maintain international peace and tranquility and domestic long-term stability in a peaceful way and at a relatively low cost for a long period of time [13]. (5) The strategic position of marine security is becoming increasingly prominent. With the development of China's economy and trade, the enhancement of marine awareness, the increasing attention to waterway safety, the continuous increase in demand for resources, and the development of science and technology, China's marine security strategic position has become more prominent. At the same time, since the 1990s, China's military expenditure has continued to grow at a double-digit rate, and the rapid increase in the strength of China's navy and air force has gradually acquired the ability to protect marine security. The military strategy of moving towards the blue ocean is a sign of this confidence.

Related to this, maritime disputes that were previously unresolved are now on the agenda. But this does not necessarily mean war, and China's growing power does not mean expansion and aggression, as evidenced by the demarcation of land borders between China and many small countries [14]. China hopes to demarcate borders reasonably through friendly consultations, so that borders can become a bond for developing friendship with neighboring countries, rather than the beginning of mutual confrontation and hostility.

## **4. JAPANESE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY IN THE NEW ERA**

After World War II, Japan "embraced failure" [15], built its country on trade, and formed a security strategy based on the Japan-US security system and supplemented by independent defense.

With the rapid development of Japan's economy, Japan's security strategy has gradually transformed and continuously enhanced its independent defense capabilities. Since the beginning of this century, Japan's security strategy has mainly focused on Japan's surrounding areas, the Asia-Pacific region, and the Persian Gulf region, which is closely related to Japan's economy. Its main goal is to ensure the military security and economic and social stability of Japan's mainland, that is, to effectively prevent military invasions, prevent large-scale influx of refugees, and ensure Japan's economic power status, so that Japan can still maintain its "great power" status in terms of economic scale. Ensure the smooth flow of sea transportation lines from Japan to Southeast Asia and the Middle East, and effectively respond to emergencies in the areas along the lines. Stabilize the surrounding environment and participate in and lead the multilateral security mechanism in the Asia-Pacific region in the form of "the United States leads and Japan follows". The main means for Japan to achieve the above goals are to adjust and strengthen the Japan-US alliance to strengthen "self-help" efforts, enhance defense capabilities, strengthen neighboring diplomacy, and promote the establishment of regional multilateral security mechanisms [16].

It should be pointed out that as an island country, Japan's defense focuses on the control of sea and air power. Since its formal establishment, the Japanese Self-Defense Force has been tasked with protecting its maritime rights and interests. Along with the entire process of armament expansion, its Maritime Self-Defense Force has a tendency to gradually strengthen. Its anti-submarine capability ranks first in the world, and the combat capability of the Maritime Self-Defense Force should not be underestimated. It can be seen that Japan attaches great importance to maritime security issues, and the pace of security force construction has never stopped [17].

## **5. DIAOYU ISLANDS DISPUTE AND CHINA-JAPAN SECURITY STRATEGIES**

The security strategies of China and Japan intersect over the Diaoyu Islands issue, fully demonstrating the structural changes and structural contradictions in bilateral relations [18], but this does not mean that the two countries will move towards a full-scale conflict.

The change of power in international relations is one of the decisive factors affecting the formulation of a country's foreign policy, both in international relations theory and in practice [19]. With China's rapid rise and surpassing Japan to become the second largest economic power, it has participated extensively in the international system and its role in regional and even global affairs has been continuously enhanced. Along with this, it has been increasingly regarded as a competitor or potential threat by various countries, and various "China threat theories" have emerged. In the process, Japan has been in a long-term economic downturn and "fallen" to the third largest economic power in the world. It regards China as the main competitor for its regional dominance and has a very prominent mentality of suspicion, worry and precaution against China [20]. In addition, its domestic politics has shifted to the right, its foreign policy has become increasingly tough, and its pace of becoming a "normal" country has accelerated, which has also made China very worried about the revival of its militarism, and the two countries have fallen into a "security dilemma" [21]. In addition, the strategic distrust between the two countries, the historical complex that cannot be resolved, and the identity crisis of the two countries' people have made the conflicting interest issues in the relationship between the two countries more complicated and unstable, which have been vividly reflected in the Diaoyu Islands dispute.

However, despite the huge risks of this status quo, a major war will not break out soon. Because both sides hope to maintain a relatively stable national environment and provide a good environment for economic and social development, and the weight of the Diaoyu Islands in Sino-Japanese relations is far from the core interests of each other, so they still maintain relative restraint in dealing with related issues. Moreover, because "China's rise" is gradual, cooperative and economic development-oriented, China adopts a peaceful and cooperative foreign policy, and the huge Chinese market also provides a huge driving force for the growth of the regional economy. The process of China's rise is a process that benefits Japan and most countries in the region, and Japan is one of the biggest beneficiaries of the current close economic and trade interaction between China and Japan. Therefore, the power transfer and change in East Asia does not necessarily lead to China and Japan adopting a policy of comprehensive hostility and confrontation [22].

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