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Disputes over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands: Communication Tactics and Grand Strategies

Chin-Chung Chao¹ and Dexin Tian²

Abstract

This study explores the communication tactics and grand strategies of each of the involved parties in the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes. Under the theoretical balance between liberal optimists and realist pessimists and through the hermeneutic analysis of the primary data of relevant remarks of governmental officials, official statements, letters and memoranda, declassified CIA reports, interview transcripts of scholars and experts, relevant media reports and readers' online responses from the LexisNexis news database and Google News website as well as secondary data of relevant study results of scholars and researchers, we found that the Japanese have been secretive and opportunistic, the Americans calculated and one-sided, the Taiwanese cooperative and compromising, and the Chinese assertive and ambitious. As grand strategies, Japan plans to become a normal state with a normal army for regional and global leadership. The US makes sure that it has no rivals in all aspects regardless of its close ally Japan or trade-partner China so as to maintain hegemonic supremacy in the world. Taiwan adopts a grand strategy of accommodation and compromise to raise the confidence level in its political identity and economic integration. China pursues its peaceful development by accelerating economic growth, building up defensive military forces, and creating a favorable international environment. The findings provide valuable understanding of the international nature of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Island disputes and insight into a long list of similar territorial and bordering issues in the East and South China Seas.

Keywords: Communication tactics, grand strategies, the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes

For decades, there have been intensifying maritime territorial clashes in both the Each China Sea and South China Sea.

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In the East China Sea, the disputes over the sovereignty of a group of islands between the People's Republic of China (PRC or China) and Japan since the 1970s, which also involve the Republic of Taiwan (ROC or Taiwan) and the US, have become so frequent and intense that they are considered "one of the most burning matters in Sino-Japanese relations and even in East Asian politics at large" (Hagström, 2005, p. 160). Taking the intensity of the situation into consideration, the US has recently passed a resolution, reaffirming its strong support "for the peaceful resolution of territorial sovereignty and jurisdictional disputes in the Asia-Pacific maritime domains" (Senate Resolution 167, 2013, p. 1).

The disputes over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands came to the open when the United Nations (UN) Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East reported, "a high probability exists that the continental shelf between Taiwan and Japan may be one of the most prolific oil reservoirs in the world" (Emery, et al. 1969, pp. 39-41). Since the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands sit right in the middle of the reported oil and gas deposits, periodic tensions and conflicts as well as nation-wide campaigns over the sovereignty of these islands have been witnessed among Japan, China, and Taiwan since the 1970s with growing intensity and increasing scales. All claimants stick to their claims with no inch of compromise for the strategic significance of the islands and national interests as well as national identity at the same time.

To make the issue more complicated, the US took control and administered the islands as part of the Ryukyu Islands from 1953 till 1971 (Manyin, 2013). In 1971, the US returned the Ryukyu Islands including the administrative rights of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands to Japan under the *Okinawa Reversion Treaty*. For its own national interests, the US "has never taken a position on sovereignty, but we have made it very clear that the islands are part of our mutual treaty obligations, and the obligation to defend Japan" as stressed by former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (Remarks by Hillary Clinton, 2010, para. 22). The disputes over these islands and the reactions of the involved parties have already caused waves of sensation all over the world. Valencia (2007) warned, "disputes over small islands and ocean space may become the tail that wags the dog of international relations" (p. 128).

Kristof (2010) also stressed, "this is a boundary dispute that could get ugly and some day have far-reaching consequences for China, Japan, Taiwan and the United States" (p. 1).

Thus, we can see that there are roughly two sides of four parties in the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes. While China, Taiwan and Japan are claimants in the disputes, the US is siding with Japan as a deeply-involved party. Although there are different motives in each of the involved parties, China has been supporting Taiwan in its claim over the sovereignty of the islands under the jurisdiction of Yilan County whereas the US has been backing up Japan in its declaration of the islands as part of Okinawa of Japan. In the process of this decade-long disputes, China is looming large as a big rising power, the US is defending its world supremacy, and Japan and Taiwan have never been contented with their international images. To us communication scholars, the disputes under discussion are international and cross-cultural in nature and each party is fighting for its own national interests and reestablishing its expected national identity in the process. In this study, we aim to focus on the major conflicts in the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes by exploring the communication tactics and grand strategies of each of the involved parties. Before specifying our research questions for the realization of our research purposes, we conduct the following literature review as our research foundation and academic guidance.

Literature Review

For the purposes of our study, we draw from and contribute to three categories of literature: (1) the geographical information of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Island and the claimants' sovereignty claims; (2) the major conflicts in the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes; and (3) the nature of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes.

The geographical information and the claimants' sovereignty claims. The islands under discussion used to be called the Pinnacle Islands in English. Today, they are better known as Diaoyu Islands in China, Diaoyutai in Taiwan, and Senkakus in Japan. As an archipelago, the islands are located in the East China Sea "about 100 nautical miles northeast of Chi-lung, the major northern port of Taiwan," and "approximately 220 nautical miles from Naha, Okinawa, and Fu-chou, China" (Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (CIA, 1971).

Altogether, the islands consist of five islets and three rocky outcroppings with a total landmass of less than 7 square kilometers or 3 square miles. Japan nationalized three of the islands on September 25, 2012.

The largest island is about two miles in length and less than one mile in width. None of the islands are inhabited or have had any human economic activities from indigenous resources. Appendix A provides an updated map of the disputed islands by Centanni (2013). Based on "Diaoyu Dao: An Inherent Territory of China (White Paper of PRC)" (State Council Information Office of PRC, 2012) and the Official Statement of "The Diaoyutai Islands: An Inherent Part of the Territory of the Republic of China (Official Statement of ROC)" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of ROC), we can summarize the sovereignty claims of China and Taiwan as follows:

1) The Diaoyu/Diaoyutai Islands are an inseparable part of Yilan County of Taiwan. Since PRC considers Taiwan part of China; therefore, the islands are part of the Chinese territory; 2) The islands were discovered, named, and used by the Chinese for centuries; 3) The islands are the prolongation of the East China Sea continental shelf, with the black trench separating the territorial waters of Taiwan and Ryukyu or today's Okinawa; 4) Japan's occupation of the islands in 1895 during the first Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 is illegal and invalid; and 5) The islands were returned to China in accordance with the international legal documents of the *Cairo Declaration* in 1943 and the *Potsdam Proclamation* in 1945.

In "The Basic View on the Sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands (The Basic View of Japan)" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2013b) and Q&A on the Senkaku Islands (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2013a), Japan sticks to the following claims: 1) The Senkaku Islands were incorporated into Japan as *terra nullius* by a Cabinet Decision on January 14, 1895 after repeated surveys, and Japan demonstrated continuous state authority on them henceforth; 2) The islands were not included in the territory of Taiwan, which had been ceded to Japan according to the *Treaty of Shimonoseki* in 1895; 3) The islands were not as part of the territory that Japan had to give up but as part of the territory under US management in accordance with Items No 2 and No. 3 of the *San Francisco Peace Treaty* in 1951; 4) The islands were returned to Japan with the Ryukyu Islands by the US in 1971, and China and Taiwan never raised any objections until potential oil reserves were identified in the region; and 5) Maps of China and textbooks in Taiwan used to recognize the islands as Japanese territory; therefore, there exists no disputes of the sovereignty over these islands.

The Major Conflicts in the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes. According to Burton (1990), disputes are confrontations that can be resolved by means of negotiation or arbitration whereas conflicts refer to long-term, deeply-rooted issues which are non-negotiable. In accordance with Burton's definition of conflicts, there have been four major conflicts in the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes based on The Basic View of Japan, White Paper of PRC, Official Statement of ROC and the study results of scholars (e.g.: Beukel, 2011; Drifte, 2013; Shaw, 1999; Swaine, 2013).

The 1885-1895 conflict. Japan claimed that the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands were found *terra nullius* or uninhabited and incorporated into its territory by virtue of a Cabinet Decision on January 14, 1895 after thorough surveys since 1885 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2013b). Both China and Taiwan hold that the islands were first discovered, named, and used by the Chinese since the 14th century. Japan seized the opportunity of China's defeat in the *First Sino-Japanese War* of 1894-1895 to annex the islands with the *Treaty of Shimonoseki* signed on April 17, 1895, three months after its Cabinet Decision (State Council Information Office of PRC, 2012; Shaw, 1999).

The 1951-1972 conflict. Japan insisted that, under the *San Francisco Peace Treaty* of 1951, it renounced Taiwan but maintained territorial sovereignty over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. The US, which administrated the Ryukyu Islands from 1953 to 1971, returned the Ryukyu Islands including the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands to Japan under the *Okinawa Reversion Treaty* in 1971. Neither China nor Taiwan made any objections to the above stipulations until potential oil reserves were identified in the region in 1971 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2013b).

To both China and Taiwan, the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands were returned to China after World War II. However, it is the US that arbitrarily included the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands under the US trusteeship in the 1950s and decided to return the administration power over them to Japan in the 1970s under the *Okinawa Reversion Treaty*, which was signed without the presence and agreement of neither China nor Taiwan (State Council Information Office of PRC, 2012). The governments of both China and Taiwan filed solemn official protests, but they did not alter the US decision. Therefore, China and Taiwan consider the *Okinawa Reversion Treaty* in 1971 invalid and the authorization of Japanese administrative power over the islands illegal. In May 1972, "thousands of overseas Chinese students mainly from Taiwan and Hong Kong participated in protest marches in major U.S. cities" (Shaw, 1999, p. 14).

The 1989-1997 conflict. While China was under extreme pressure from the Western World due to its 1989 Tiananmen crackdown, Japan was preparing to approve the lighthouse on one of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands erected in 1978 by the Japanese right-wing group, Nihon Seinen-sha or Japan Youth Federation, as an “official navigation indicator” (Shaw, 1999). By the same token, the same right-wing group set up a five-meter, solar powered, aluminum lighthouse on another island of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands “as Chinese sensitivities had been heightened by the Taiwan Strait crisis of 1995-6” (Beukel, 2011, p. 12). In 1996, the Japanese Diet officially ratified the 200-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) under the UN Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS), which covered the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. Since then, Japan began excluding foreign fishing in its EEZ by vessels and helicopters from the Japanese Maritime Safety Agency.

As responses, the governments of both China and Taiwan condemned the lighthouse erections as a violation of Chinese sovereignty, and a front-page editorial in the *People's Daily* declared: “Whoever expects the 1.2 billion Chinese people to give up even an inch of their territory is only daydreaming” (Downs & Saunders, 1998/99, p. 133). As a signatory of the UNCLOS, China also clarified its 200-mile EEZ, which included the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, overlapping the declared EEZ of Japan. Besides, thousands of emotional “Baodiao” or defending the Diaoyu Islands demonstrators went to the streets of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

The 2012-the present conflict. Provoked by the Japanese Central Government’s decision on a trawler collision with the ships of the Japanese coast guards in 2010 and taking advantage of the US pivot or rebalancing strategy in the Asia-Pacific region since 2011, then Governor of Tokyo, Shintaro Ishihara announced that Tokyo Municipal Government would raise 2.05 billion yen or \$26 million to purchase three of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in order to assert Japanese sovereignty. With the intention to prevent a bigger crisis in the relation with China, the Japanese government under Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda spent the same amount purchasing the three islands and nationalized them.

Seeing that there is no need to respect the status quo any longer, China publicly declared its territorial sea baselines around the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. For the first time, China claimed that the islands are under Chinese administration. In late 2012, there appeared large-scale, numerous, and sometimes violent demonstrations in the streets of China, Taiwan, and Japan.

Since then, there has been “an ongoing pattern of potentially dangerous interactions between Chinese and Japanese air and naval vessels jostling for position in or near the islands’ territorial air space and waters” (Swaine, 2013, p. 1).

The nature of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes. The Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes are complicated and multifaceted because of historical, economic and symbolic significance. The complexity of the disputes is, in the words of Pan (2007),

not only in its multiple and interrelated foci such as its ownership, its return, and the demarcation of the Sino-Japanese maritime boundary, but also in its entanglement with other problems in bilateral relations, both China and Japan’s domestic politics, and their respective broad foreign relations as well. (p. 87)

As mentioned earlier, the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes involve two sides of China and Taiwan as the accusers and Japan and the US as the defenders, and each of the four parties has its own motives and goals throughout the disputes. According to Blanchard (2000), the value of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands lies in “the rights they convey to energy and rich fishing grounds, the proximity they afford to strategic sea lanes, and the relevance they have to other territorial disputes” (p. 122). Below is an account of the three aspects of significance.

Historical significance. According to Zhu (2011), the Diaoyuyu/Senkaku Islands disputes are just a trigger of conflicts between China and Japan. Actually, one of the main reasons behind the disputes is “the mistrust between Japan and China related to history” (p. 2). Since 1900, Japan secretly changed the name of the islands from Diaoyu to Senkaku, and China and Taiwan were left “unaware that the uninhabited ‘Senkaku Islands’ were in fact the former Diaoyu Islands” (Shaw, 2012, para. 15). For decades, Japan kept revising its history textbooks for school students by replacing “Shinlyaku” meaning “invade” with “Shinnshutsu” meaning “enter” in the accounts of Japanese occupation of China during World War II (1937-1945). There are historical documents and photographs from “Western businessmen and missionaries who remained in Nanking” (Yale Divinity School Library, 2008), showing that the Japanese soldiers killed about 300,000 Chinese including women and children during the Nanjing Massacre from December 1937 to January 1938.

However, today's Japanese tend to believe that either the number of the dead Chinese was exaggerated or the Massacre itself is a fake narrative (Shudo, Susumu & Shinjiro, 2005). It is true that Japan "formally apologized in 1993 to the women who were forced into wartime brothels for Japanese soldiers, and in 1995 to nations that suffered from Japanese aggression during the war," as Fackler (2013, para. 2) reported. It is also true that ultranationalists in Japan and hawkish government officials like, Shinzo Abe, the current Prime Minister have kept "whitewashing Japan's wartime atrocities" (Fackler, 2013, para. 2), "visiting the Yasukuni Shrine where 1068 convicted war criminals together with 13 Class A war criminals were secretly enshrined" (War Criminals, 2003, para. 3), and "planning to rewrite Japan's 66-year-old pacifist constitution" (Hayashi, 2013, para. 2). Most seriously, the Japanese government today denies the existence of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes even though "both governments agreed to shelve the issue when the two countries normalized their diplomatic relations in 1972 and concluded their *Peace and Friendship Treaty* in 1978" (Drifte, 2013, p. 17). Thus, there is a "mutual denial of status recognition between China and Japan" (Yang, 2008, p. 273). Without taking sufficient cautions from both Japan and China, the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes could become a second Marco Polo Bridge Event, a self-created excuse for a bigger plot.

Economic significance. Economically, sovereignty over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands could "convey exclusive economic rights to nearly 20,000 square nautical miles of undersea resources" (Ramos-Mrosovsky, 2008, pp. 903-904). It means that control of the islands would confer ownership of natural resources such as fishery and potential oil and gas reserves in their vicinity. The islands, which are located on the eastern edge of the continental margin in the East China Sea, exerts great impact on "both China and Japan's increasingly voracious appetite for energy, natural resources, and extension into the high seas" (Pan, 2007, p. 72). Meanwhile, the sovereignty over the islands "can be a factor that significantly influences the location of a maritime boundary between China and Japan" (p. 84). With China's continuous economic growth, especially surpassing Japan as the second-largest economy in 2010, Japan felt increasingly threatened as it does not "accept China's claim of benignity or 'peaceful rise', nor does it recognize the legitimacy of a putative Chinese hegemony in East Asia" (Goh, 2011, p. 8).

Symbolic significance. Since both China and Japan have maritime territorial disputes with their neighboring countries, both have been making the greatest efforts avoiding any potential negative domino effect in the handling of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands disputes. Just as Koo (2009) noted, any concessions in the disputes “could possibly jeopardize their respective claims to the other disputed islands” (p. 206). Furthermore, the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes can also vent particular viewpoints of the rapidly growing nationalism and passionate thirst for national identity in all the claimants’ respective countries. This is why Suganuma (2000) remarked: “If there is a flash point to ignite a third Sino-Japanese War, it will be the disputes over the ownership of the Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea” (p. 151). In short, the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes are not just territorial. They bear chain-effect significance in the grand strategies in the national interests and strengthening or revising processes of national identities of the involved parties.

Therefore, the hope of an immediate and effective solution to the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes seems pessimistically dim and distant. As communication scholars, we intend to provide another perspective on the prospect of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes by realizing the aims of this study as listed at the end of the introductory part. To this end, we raise the following two research questions (RQ): RQ1: What are the communication tactics in the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes? RQ2: What grand strategies do the involved parties intend to fulfill in the Diaoyu/Senkaku disputes?

In this study, communication tactics mean the carefully planned verbal and nonverbal behaviors in public interactions. Grand strategies refer to the purposeful employment of all available instruments of power, especially military forces for the long-term goals of a country. Answers to these questions will help understanding the international nature, the claimants’ claims, and the conflicts of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Island disputes. They will also provide insight into a long list of similar territorial and bordering issues concerning the three claimants as well as the US as a deeply-involved party in the said disputes and only superpower in the present-day world.

Theoretical Frameworks

To comprehend territorial or bordering disputes and conflicts, there are two camps of scholars in general. While liberals argue that territorial disputes lose their salience as a result of increasing economic interdependence, realists counter-argue that economic interdependence not only fails to promote peace but also increases conflicts due to asymmetric dependence and inequality between economic partners. According to Cronin and Kaplan (2012), the arguments of both liberal optimists and realist pessimists provide the most helpful theoretical lenses for maritime territorial disputes. Liberal optimists believe in the pacifying power resulting from economic interdependence, international institutions, and democratization.

First, it is the strong belief of liberal optimists that bilateral economic exchanges result in shared interests and good relations between states. In other words, "the greater the volume of the trade and investment flowing between two countries, the more groups of people on both sides will have a strong interest in avoiding conflicts and preserving peace" (Cronin & Kaplan, 2012, p. 12). Second, besides using trade as an instrument of peace, liberal optimists also attach great importance to the role of various international institutions such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Regional and international institutions can help "improving communication between states, reducing uncertainty about intentions, and increasing the capacity of governments to make credible, binding commitments to one another" on one hand. On the other, they can also help to "ease or counteract some of the pernicious effects of international anarchy by clearing the way for higher levels of cooperation and trust than would otherwise be attainable" (p. 13). Finally, liberal optimists find that democratic states rarely go to war with one another because "regimes that rely for their power and legitimacy on the consent of the governed are less likely to enter lightly into military adventures." Therefore, "as the number of democracies in the world increases, the likelihood of international conflicts should diminish" (p. 15).

In contrast, realist pessimists find "recurrent struggles for power and survival inescapable laws of nature and human history is a vicious circle" (Cronin & Kaplan, 2012, pp. 16-17). They believe that "it is the material power and, in particular, the military strength of the various units in an international system that has typically been decisive in shaping the patterns of relations among them" (p. 17).

Vasquez (1997) summarized the shared fundamental assumptions of the realist pessimists about the world. Briefly, they assume that (1) nation-states are the most important actors in international relations; (2) international relation is a struggle for power and peace; (3) international anarchy brings about disorder and disputes.

Due to the complicated and multifaceted nature of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes, we looked through the theoretical lenses of both liberal optimists and realist pessimists for our study. Just as Jervis (1991/92) noted, “only rarely does a single factor determine the way politics will work out” (p. 40). Gaddis (1992/93) seconded, “significant outcomes are invariably shaped by the convergence or intersection of complementary processes or even the potential fratricide of contradictory ones” (p. 44).

Research Methods

For the purposes of this study, we collected our primary data from relevant speeches or remarks¹ of governmental officials from Japan, the US, China, and Taiwan, official statements², and historical records in the form of treaties/declarations/agreements, official letters and memoranda as well as declassified CIA reports³. We also included interview transcripts of scholars and experts⁴, relevant media reports and readers’ online responses from both the LexisNexis news database and Google News website⁵, and study results of scholars and researchers. The standards we adopted for the selection of our primary data are threefold: up-to-date, representative, and authoritative.

For data analysis, we adopted hermeneutics to interpret the interactions in the above-mentioned communication artifacts of Japan, China, Taiwan and the US. Byrne (2001) explained, hermeneutics is usually used for the interpretation and understanding of texts derived from stories, interviews, participant observations, letters, speeches, or other relevant written documents and personal experiences. Girish (2008) further clarified, as an art of interpreting, hermeneutics developed into a theory of human understanding through the works of Scheleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamar, and Derrida. The essence of hermeneutics is that “the concealed import of a text cannot be understood without uncovering the historical contact and the sociocultural milieu of the community on which it is based” (p. 2).

This means that, to thoroughly and appropriately analyze a text, it is essential to understand the origin of the text along with its historical and cultural backgrounds. Thus, the selected texts in this study are closely examined in connection to their relevant historical and socio-cultural contexts for the generation of themes or patterns as research findings, which reflect the knowledge of the phenomenon under study. To reduce subjectivity during the whole process of our analysis, the two authors independently coded the selected artifacts, analyzed them comparatively at the message level, and kept exchanging notes, views, and conclusions of their analyzed results in accordance with the above theoretical and methodological guidelines.

Findings and Analysis

Our research findings are twofold: the communication tactics of the four parties in the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes and their respective grand strategies. Below is a detailed account and critical analysis of first the communication tactics and then the grand strategies of each involved party.

Communication Tactics

The secretive and opportunistic Japanese. The Japanese side has been secretive and opportunistic when they integrated the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands into their territory in 1895 and flared up most of the four major conflicts as described above. In its Q&A on the Senkaku Islands, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (2013a) claimed, the Senkaku Islands were incorporated into Japan as *terra nullius* with a Cabinet Decision on January 14, 1895 after thorough surveys, and Japan demonstrated continuous state authority on them henceforth. However, “official Chinese and Ryukyu documents confirmed that there existed no land without owner between the two neighboring countries [of China and the Ryukyu Kingdom]” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of China b, para. 6). Even the so-called “thorough surveys” were incomplete as can be seen from the following declassified correspondence between the Japanese officials then:

Your letter of inquiry, Secret No. 34, concerning the formation of the harbors and other related matters of Kuba-shima and Uotsuri-shima [Diaoyu/Senkaku] has been received. However, ever since the said islands were investigated by police agencies of Okinawa Prefecture back in 1885, there have been no subsequent field surveys conducted. As a result, it is difficult to provide any specific reports on them.

(Shaw, 1999, p. 82) Although the Japanese government knew that “the aforementioned islands are close to the border of China... and China has already given names to the islands,” (Shaw, 1999, p. 75), it waited from 1885 to 1895 for the appropriate occasion and incorporated the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands into Japanese territory on January 14, 1895. The date of this decision is just three months before China was defeated in the First Sino-Japanese War (Aug. 1, 1894-April 17, 1895). Moreover, the decision “was carried out in total secrecy and was never notified to concerned states, in particular, Qing China” (p. 99). Besides being secretive in the occupation the islands in the 1885-1895 conflict, Japan has been taking advantage of opportunities in other conflicts as well.

For example, the 1951-1972 conflict occurred because the governments of Japan and the US excluded China and Taiwan and completed their backroom deals by exchanging administrative power over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands for the long-term rights of military bases in Okinawa. On August 6, 1948, a declassified report from the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) recorded that the Prime Minister of Japan sent a message to the US State Department in January 1951, agreeing to “give the US all required military rights there” for “transferring title to the Ryukyus and Bonins” (p. 107). The US agreed and former US Secretary of State Dulles claimed that Japan had “residual sovereignty” in the Ryukyu Islands, which means: “The United States will not transfer its sovereign powers [administrative, legislative, and jurisdiction] over the Ryukyu Islands to any nation other than Japan” (p. 109). Commenting on such backroom deals, Price (2001) sharply noted, the San Francisco Peace Treaty “left in its wake not only a divided China, but also numerous other territorial disputes that the U.S. military is only too pleased to use in justifying its continuing presence in the region” (p. 6).

Regarding the purchase and nationalization of three of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, the Japanese side is both opportunistic and misleading. To start with, ultra-nationalist Shintaro Ishihara intended to “purchase the islands back in the 1970s” (Drifte, 2013, p. 36). As Governor of Tokyo then, Shintaro Ishihara felt very disappointed at the weakness in the Noda Administration towards China in dealing with the trawler collision case in 2010. When the US began implementing its re-balance strategy in the Asia-Pacific region in 2011, Governor Ishihara regarded it as a golden opportunity.

He announced that he would collect donations and purchase three of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in the name of Tokyo Metropolitan Government, with further plans to construct port facilities and other constructions. He chose his announcement "for maximum effect on the occasion of a speech at the conservative Washington DC-based Heritage Foundation on April 16, 2012" (Tatsumi, 2013, p. 117). With the intention to "prevent an irreversible damage to Japan-China relations... and assuming that China would understand the reason," (pp. 117-118) then Prime Minister Noda announced that the Japanese Central Government would purchase and nationalize the three islands. In the words of Tatsumi (2013), this "was the lesser evil of the two options" (p. 118). However, instead of lessening the tension between the two countries, the nationalization of the three islands by the Noda Administration added fuel to the fire and intensified the degree and scope of the conflict. From the subsequent consequences in the worsening Japan-China bilateral relationship, it is reasonable to suspect that the latter might be the genuine intention of the Japanese government.

The calculated and one-sided Americans. As the architect of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes, the US first asked if China would take the Ryukyu Islands including the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in 1943, then granted Japan the residual sovereignty over these islands in 1965, and kept backing up Japan in words and deeds ever since. When World War II was drawing to an end and when Chiang Kai-shek, former President and Generalissimo of ROC met US President Roosevelt in Cairo in November 1943, Roosevelt "enquired more than once whether China would want the Ryukyu Islands" (US Department of State, 1943, p. 324). Although Chiang agreed with a joint occupation with the US, the US completely changed its mind by granting Japan residual sovereignty over the islands. A declassified US State Department memorandum on the Ryukyus reads: "We recognize that Japan maintains residual sovereignty over the Ryukyu Islands, and have agreed to return them to full Japanese control as soon as Free World security interests permit" (Smith, 2013, pp. 29-30).

The change in the US position resulted from two major reasons. On the one hand, the US sought to cultivate Japan instead of Chiang's ROC as a key ally against the former Soviet Union in the Asia-Pacific region during the Cold War. On August 6, 1948, a report from the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (1948) noted, "the failure of the Chinese Nationalists in Formosa since the end of the war indicates the impracticability of awarding the Ryukyus to the Nationalists" (p.3). The report also emphasized:

Recognition of China's claims would involve a tremendous risk. Chinese control might easily deny use of the bases to the US, and, in the event of final subjugation of the Nationalist forces by the Communists, might give the Soviets easy access to the Islands. (p. 3)

Thus, Japan was to replace Chiang's China as a new ally of the US and, as a result, got rewarded with the expected ownership of the Ryukyus including the administrative power over the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands.

On the other hand, the US was reluctant to lose ROC to Communist PRC as a US ally and felt challenged by the potential domino effect of spreading Communism. Excluding China at the San Francisco Peace Treaty conference in 1951, the US was determined to make Japan "align it with the West and alienate it from Asia" and "the Pacific an America lake" (Price, 2001, p. 13). To ensure the success of its pivot strategy to the Asian-Pacific region today, the US continues supporting Japan in the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes. On November 29, 2012, the US Senate approved Amendment No. 3275 to the 2013 *National Defense Authorization Act*, announcing:

While the United States takes no position on the ultimate sovereignty of the Senkaku Islands, the United States acknowledges the administration of Japan over the Senkaku Islands.... The United States reaffirms its commitment to the Government of Japan under Article V of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security. (Congressional Record, Senate 2012, p. 7201)

The amendment is meant to counter China's attempts to challenge Japan's administration of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. Should China try to attack or take over the islands, the US will fight with Japan against China under its treaty commitment. Earlier, former Defense Secretary Panetta announced in Singapore on June 1, 2012 that by 2020 the US "will have 60 percent of its naval forces in the Pacific and 40 percent in the Atlantic" (Wan, 2012, para. 2).

The cooperative and compromising Taiwanese. To demonstrate that the Taiwanese side has been cooperative and compromising in the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes, we provide two examples.

After the ROC regime was forced to relocate itself in Taiwan, it became “politically, economically, and militarily dependent on the US” (Shaw, 1999, p. 114). To secure its national survival at the time and potential retake of the mainland in the near future with further US support, the ROC ambassador to the US clarified his government’s position in a memorandum on March 15, 1971 as follows:

Since the conclusion of the second world war, the United States government assumed military occupation over the islands located south of 29 north latitude pursuant to Article III of the *San Francisco Peace Treaty*, the Tiao-yu-t’ai Islets were also included within the boundaries of United States occupation, which the ROC government did not express its objection due to regional security concerns. However, this may not be interpreted as [my government’s] acquiescence to the Tiao-yu-t’ai Islets being a part of the Okinawa Islands. (As cited in Shaw, 1999, p. 113)

Thus, cooperation and compromise are offered for “regional security concerns.” At the same time, these tactics are also applied when Taiwan emphasizes that the Tiao-yu-t’ai Islets or Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands are separate from the Okinawa Islands. Below is another example of the present-day government in Taiwan.

The government of Taiwan today is clear that its principal goal is to “obtain fair access for its fishermen to the waters around the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, waters that have been traditional fishing grounds for Taiwanese fishermen for centuries” (Romberg, 2013, p. 6). This is why the *Taiwan-Japan Fisheries Agreement* was signed on April 10, 2013. The agreement “will protect the rights and interests of Taiwanese fishermen operating within a designated zone and extend their fishing area by an additional 1,400 square nautical miles” (Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Vancouver, 2013, para. 1). Hailed as “a landmark agreement on protection of each jurisdiction’s fishing rights in their overlapping territories near the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands,” (Library of Congress, 2013, para. 1), the agreement best represents President Ma’s East China Sea Peace Initiative and East China Sea Peace Initiative Implementation Guidelines.

The assertive and ambitious Chinese. During the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes, China has been taking the assertive and ambitious approaches. That is, China “uses an action by another party as justification to push back hard and change the facts on the ground in its favor” (International Crisis Group, 2013, p. 12). \

In response to the US position to the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes and rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region, China has been both firmly assertive and strategically ambitious. In June 1971 when the US returned the Ryukyu Islands together with the disputed islands to Japan, the government of PRC published a statement, denouncing that “the treaty violated the United Nations Declaration on January 1, 1942, the Cairo Declaration, the Yalta Agreements, the Potsdam Declaration and Agreement, and the Basic Post-Surrender Policy of the Far Eastern Commission” (Price, 2001, p. 3). In November 1971, when the *Okinawa Reversion Agreement* was ratified, the US Department of State emphasized that the US took a neutral position with regard to the competing Japanese and Chinese claims to the sovereignty over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. The change in the US position may be partially related to China’s firm reaction.

Aware of the Thucydides Trap which goes, “in 11 of 15 cases since 1500 where a rising power emerged to challenge a ruling power, war occurred” (Abahachi, 2012, para. 2), China did not object to the US rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region. Although “many Chinese believe strongly that the United States is making every effort to prevent China from rising up in order to keep its own primacy in the world,” (Kato, 2012), still “China welcomes a constructive role by the United States in promoting peace, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific” (Speech by Vice President Xi Jinping, 2012, p. 4). Furthermore, the Chinese leadership proposed the concept of a new type of great power relationship. President Xi remarked, “the two sides must work together to build a new model of major country relationship based on mutual respect and win-win cooperation for the benefit of the Chinese and American peoples, and people elsewhere in the world” (Remarks after Bilateral Meeting, 2013, para. 27). President Obama agreed by saying, “I am very much looking forward to this being a strong foundation for the kind of new model of cooperation that we can establish for years to come” (Remarks before Bilateral Meeting, 2013, para. 9).

Nevertheless, in response to the 2012 Japanese purchase of three of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, the Chinese top leaders took turns and responded with “illegal and invalid” (Yamamoto, 2012, para. 1) from then President Hu Jintao, “never yielding an inch” (para. 11) from then Premier Wen Jiabao, and “resolute opposition and strong protest” (para. 10) from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of PRC. Besides the verbal counter-measures, a series of action blows were aimed at Japan.

On September 10, 2012, China announced territorial sea baselines around the islands and the names and coordinates of 17 base points. Two days later, China Meteorological Administration started providing weather forecasts for the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands area. On December 14, China submitted its proposals for the extended continental shelf to the UN Continental Shelf Commission. The issuance of the sea baselines "placed the disputed islands under Chinese administration and entrance by Japanese vessels would be considered intrusions into China's territory and a violation of its sovereignty" (International Crisis Group, 2013, p. 11). On Nov. 23, 2013, the Ministry of National Defense of PRC announced its aircraft rules for the East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone, which covers the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands (Qiang, 2013, p. 1). Now, the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands are under routine patrol by Chinese surveillance airplanes and vessels, with the status quo changed from mere Japanese control to overlapping administration.

Grand Strategies

The grand strategy of Japan. The Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes began when Japan implemented its imperial state policies of expansion since the Meiji Restoration in 1868. In the process of "self-removal from the Sino-centric system," (Goh, 2011, p. 4) and modernizing their country by embracing Europe, the Japanese gained their "self-image of themselves as a 'citizen-subject' of an integrated nation" (Kim, 2012, p. 2). Their "sense of superiority to Asian neighbors grew to create Asianism that would justify invading neighboring countries," which was gradually developed from the "Greater East Union Theory," "Ideals of the East," and "Treatise on Greater Asianism" (Shi, 2008, pp. 2-3). During the First and Second Sino-Japanese Wars, Asianism evolved into the "aggressive theory of East League and Greater Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" (p. 4). Under such grand strategies, Japan integrated the Ryukyu Kingdom as Okinawa Prefecture in 1879, incorporated the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in 1895, and colonized Taiwan from 1895 to 1945 and Korea from 1910 to 1945. Japan also invaded China and many other Asian countries as well as the US from 1937 to 1945.

At present, the Abe Administration of Japan has been steadfastly determined to "assume its rightful place as a major international power" (The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), 2013, p. 2) by stimulating Japan's economy with "Abenomics" and expanding its army with the revision of Article 9 in its constitution.

The present-day version of the Japanese grand strategy results from the Abe Administration's "larger effort to create something, akin to a 'concert of democracies' as a revival of the first Abe government's interest in 'value-oriented diplomacy' or 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity'" (p. 3). The idea is to "counter China's growing influence by linking together states with similar values stretching from East Asia through the Middle East, Central Asia and Eastern Europe" (p. 3). In the Forward to the Defense of Japan 2013 (Annual White Paper), it is written in black and white:

With the rapid expansion and intensification of activities by China in the waters and airspace around Japan..., the government has decided to increase the defense-related budget practically for the first time in 11 years to strengthen our defense posture. (Ministry of Defense of Japan, 2013).

It is clear that China is regarded as a source of threat to the national security of Japan. As its grand strategy today, Japan plans to become a normal state and join the UN Security Council for regional and global leadership on the one hand. On the other hand, Japan prepares to revise its pacifist constitution and reinforce the US-Japan alliance for the expansion and strengthening of its defensive coast guards today and preemptive military forces tomorrow. Only when Japan genuinely reflects on the lessons of its defeat in the Second World War for peaceful co-existence and mutual prosperity with other nations, can it finalize its dream of normal statehood.

The grand strategy of the US. With a military expenditure nearly as much as that of the rest of world combined, the US has "labored for more than a century to gain regional hegemony. As a regional hegemony, the US makes sure that no other great power dominates either Asia or Europe the way it does" (Mearsheimer, 2010, p. 238). Mearsheimer (2010) further clarified, it is "the US Manifest Destiny to expand America's boundaries from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean" (p. 238). In the National Security Strategy of 2002, Former US President George W. Bush (2001) explicitly stated, "our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States (para. 7). This is why, during the Cold War from 1945 to 1991, the US stepped into the breach between China and Japan and provided them with "dual reassurance, simultaneously guaranteeing China and Japan their security against each other and obviating the need for them to engage in direct security competition" (Christensen, 1999, p. 50).

With the shared Soviet threat disappearing at the end of the Cold War, cooperation between the US and China turned into competition and containment.

To play balance for its long-term goals, the US authorized Japan the administration, legislation, and jurisdiction power over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands but sovereignty. Just as Blanchard (2000) put it, "what the US was giving to Japan with one hand, it was taking away with the other" (p. 120). The US has also repeatedly stated that "it remains an observer in the ongoing East China Sea dispute over sovereignty, but it has sided with Tokyo in claiming that the Senkaku Islands fall under the administrative control of Japan and under the US-Japan Security Agreement" (Arai, Goto & Wang, 2013, p. 6). In brief, the "Diaoyu/Senkaku problem arose both directly and indirectly as a consequence of the US Cold War policy in East Asia" (Koo, 2009, p. 228). For its grand strategy of hegemonic supremacy, especially its rebalance in the Asia-Pacific region, the US does not want to see a close China-Japan relationship, which may affect its ring-holding tactic and long-term strategy. In the process of establishing and maintaining its hegemonic supremacy, the US has both gains and losses, exerting favorable and unfavorable impact in an immeasurable degree upon the rest of the world all the time. To guarantee long-term, mutual benefits for itself and the rest of the world, the US ought to outwit other nations without taking advantage of any of them by sowing or reaping conflicts.

The grand strategy of Taiwan. During the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes, the government of Taiwan has been trying hard to make its voice heard and national interests realized. First, it claims the disputed islands as "an inherent part of the territory of the Republic of China (ROC)" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of ROCb, p. 1). Then, President Ma proposed his East China Sea Peace Initiative on August 5, 2012 and East China Sea Peace Initiative Implementation Guidelines on September 7, 2012. Still then, in terms of real actions, the government of Taiwan summoned Sumio Tarui, Japan's representative to Taiwan on September 11, 2012 and met Tadashi Imai, president of Japan's Interchange Association on September 25, 2012 respectively to "strongly protest Japan's purchase of three islets of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands" (The Central News Agency, pp. 2-3). In addition, groups of Taiwanese, escorted by their coast guard vessels, managed to land on the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands waving flags or leaving marks or sailed into the disputed waters to declare sovereignty quite a number of times, such as September 1960, October 1996, and July 2012, to name a few. Finally, at the dismay of PRC, Taiwan went ahead and signed the *Taiwan-Japan Fisheries Agreement* on April 10, 2013.

Thus, Taiwan has adopted a grand strategy of accommodation and cooperation for its “confidence building and economic integration” (Zhang, 2011, p. 269). Hopefully, Taiwan can continue playing its cautious and constructive role among the three overwhelmingly powerful partners and prove to be the best though as the weakest.

The grand strategy of China. While including the sovereignty over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands as part of its core interests, China has been realizing its military strategic goals of breaking through the first island chain, developing a blue sea navy, and “venturing into the global maritime domain, a sphere long dominated by the US Navy” (US Department of Defense, 2011, p. 1). As a grand strategy, China has been emphasizing the realization of the Chinese Dream of “economic prosperity, national renewal, and people’s well-being” (Remarks by President Obama and President Xi Jinping, June 8, 2013, p. 2). Connecting the Chinese Dream with the American Dream, President Xi of China hoped for “cooperation, development, peace and win-win” (p. 2).

In practice, China has been implementing its grand strategy through internal and external balancing. Internally, China continues with the realization of its peaceful development by accelerating economic growth, building up defensive military forces, and creating a favorable international environment. Externally, China has been engaging in its charming diplomacy of a rising power by joining and creating multilateral institutions and increasing or enhancing complementary and cooperative international relationships. To avoid directly provoking unfavorable responses from the US, China’s grand strategy is meant to “maintain balance among competing priorities for sustaining momentum in national economic development” and “maintain favorable trends in the security environment within which such economic development can occur” (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2006, p. 9). In the words of Lee Kuan Yew, former president of Singapore:

The Chinese have concluded that their best strategy is to build a strong a prosperous future, and use their huge and increasingly highly skilled and educated workers to out-sell and out-build all others.... The Chinese are not stupid. They will avoid the mistakes made by Germany and Japan.” (Allison, Blackwill, & Wyne, 2013, p. 5)

We can see that, as the second largest economy in the world now with a continuous economic growth, China is still cautious but gradually assertive on the international arena. To realize its long-term goal as a rising power, it has been revising Deng Xiaoping's guideline of "keeping a low profile and achieving something" for its foreign policy in the 1990s to "upholding a low profile and actively achieving something" in the present-day world (Fravel, 2012, para. 2). There have been systematic misunderstandings and increasing concerns from not only Japan and the US but other relevant nations as well regarding China's growing military power and vague future ambitions. Thus, clearer and better communication with the rest of the world should be integrated into its charming diplomatic policies and new big power relationship theory.

Conclusion

The purposes of this study were to explore the communication tactics and grand strategies of each of the involved parties in the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes. Under the theoretical guidance of the arguments between liberal optimists and realist pessimists and through the research method of hermeneutics, we have achieved two main research findings. As the answer to the first research question concerning the communication tactics of the four involved parties in the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes, Japan has been secretive and opportunistic, the US calculated and one-sided, Taiwan cooperative and compromising, and the Chinese assertive and ambitious.

As the answer to the second research question regarding the grand strategies of the four parties in the process of the disputes, Japan plans to become a normal state and join the UN Security Council for regional and global leadership on the one hand. On the other hand, Japan prepares to revise its pacifist constitution and reinforce the US-Japan alliance for the expansion and strengthening of its defensive coast guards today and preemptive military forces tomorrow. For the hegemonic supremacy in the world, especially its rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region, the US makes sure that it has no rivals in all aspects regardless of its close ally Japan or trade-partner China. To raise the confidence level of its political identity and economic integration, Taiwan effectively adopted a grand strategy of accommodation and cooperation. Finally, it is the grand strategy of China to pursue its peaceful development by accelerating economic growth, building up defensive military forces, and creating a favorable international environment.

In our study, we have found the arguments of both liberal optimists and realist pessimists applicable and helpful. The grand strategies of Japan, the US and China, which are weighted more towards national interests and state power, are projected along the trajectory of the realist pessimists. However, the grand strategy of Taiwan and some part of it of China are inclined towards cooperation and interdependence as advocated by the liberal optimists. In fact, as the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes are complicated, multifaceted, and dynamic in nature, all the involved parties have been shifting their verbal and nonverbal communication messages between constraint and aggressiveness in accordance with their respective priorities on other state, bilateral, or international affairs.

Using the research method of hermeneutics, we successfully sought relevant speeches or remarks of governmental officials, official statements, and historical records. We also found interview transcripts of scholars and experts, media reports and readers' online responses. For the generation of themes as research findings and insightful knowledge of the phenomenon under study, the research method greatly helped us conducting a careful analysis and thorough interpretation of the selected artifacts, by connecting the origin of the texts closely with their historical and cultural contexts.

In conclusion, the issue of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands may continue to be negotiable and resolvable disputes, and it can also become non-negotiable and unresolvable conflicts or a frequent trigger of a potential war. It is a test of the wisdom and communication competence of the four involved parties not only in the communication tactics but also grand strategies. The Asia-Pacific region is considered a "key engine for the global economy" (VOA, 2013, p. 1), with half of the world's population, 56% of the world economic output, and 70% percent of the earth's surface. Hopefully, the interlocked relations among the world's top economies will adjust their grand strategies and implement their communication tactics for the long-term prosperity of their respective nations and genuine peace of the entire world.

Notes

1. Speeches and remarks: Remarks by President Obama and President Xi Jinping on June 8, 2013; Remarks by President Obama and President Xi Jinping on June 7, 2013; Speech by Vice President Xi Jinping on Feb. 15, 2012; Secretary of State Clinton's Remarks: America's Pacific Century in November 2011; Secretary of State Clinton's Remarks with Vietnamese Foreign Minister Pham Gia Khiem on Oct. 30, 2010;
2. Official statements and news releases: US Senate Resolution 167 on June 10, 2013; The Basic View of Japan in February 2013; Q&A of Japan in 2013; Defense of Japan 2013 (Annual White Paper); White Paper of PRC on Sept. 10, 2012; Official Statement of ROC; East China Sea Peace Initiative and East China Sea Peace Initiative Implementation Guidelines of ROC; Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China, 2006;
3. Historical records: CIA Report of The Senkaku Islands Dispute: Oil Under Troubled Waters in May 1971; CIA Report of The Ryukyu Islands and Their Significance on Aug. 6, 1948; Congressional Record—Senate on Nov. 29, 2012; *Okinawa Reversion Treaty* on June 17, 1971; Foreign relations of the United States diplomatic papers, 1943; *Treaty of Shimonoseki* on April 17, 1895; *The Cairo Declaration* on Dec. 1, 1943;
4. Interview transcripts: Panel Interview by the Federal News Service on May 15, 2013; Interview with Wang Jisi on Oct. 5, 2012;
5. Media reports and readers' online responses: See references

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Appendix A: Map of the disputed islands by Centanni (2013)

