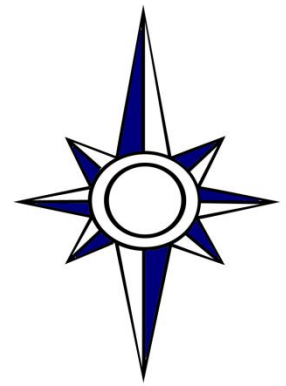


Comparative Connections

A Triannual E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations



Japan-China Relations:
Happy 40th Anniversary...?

James J. Przystup*
Institute for National Strategic Studies
National Defense University

With both Tokyo and Beijing intent on celebrating the 40th anniversary of normalization, bilateral relations started well in 2012 – and quickly went downhill. Contested history returned in a controversy sparked by Nagoya Mayor Kawamura Takashi's remarks questioning the reality of the Nanjing massacre. Repeated incidents in the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands involving ships of China's State Oceanic Administration Agency and Japan's Coast Guard kept the volatile issue of sovereignty claims politically alive. Both sides engaged in island naming games to enhance sovereignty and EEZ claims in the region. In April, Tokyo Gov. Ishihara Shintaro announced plans for the Tokyo Municipal Government to purchase three of the Senkaku Islands. With that, the relationship moved into May and Prime Minister Noda's visit to China.

Normalization plus 40

In a January interview with *Gaiko* magazine, Foreign Minister Gamba Koichiro reflected on the Japan-China relationship. Citing agreements on “wide-ranging cooperation and exchanges,” Gamba characterized Noda's December visit to China as “very successful.” He noted that it was “a very significant visit as the 40th anniversary approaches” and that Japan wanted to take advantage of the anniversary year to “deepen cultural and people-to-people exchanges.”

The opening ceremony of the anniversary year took place in Beijing on Feb. 16. State Councilor Liu Yandong met a high-level Japanese delegation led by former Minister of Economy Trade and Industry Naoshima Masayuki. He was accompanied by Japanese leaders of seven Japan-China friendship groups, including former Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Kato Koichi, now head of the Japan-China Friendship Association, and former Lower House Speaker Kono Yohei, head of the Japan Association for the Promotion of International Trade. The Japanese delegations were scheduled to meet with President Hu Jintao, but Hu failed to appear, delegating the responsibility to Jia Qinglin, chairman of the Chinese People's Political Conference, fourth in Beijing's political pecking order. When asked the reason for Hu's no-show, Chinese officials reportedly told the delegations that Hu was not pleased with the Japanese government's decision to name uninhabited islands in the Senkakus (Diaoyu in Chinese) and in the East China Sea.

* The views expressed in this article are the views of the author alone and do not necessarily represent the views or policy of the National Defense University, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. government.

History returns

On Feb. 20, the leaders of sister-cities Nanjing and Nagoya met in Nagoya. On the occasion, Nagoya Mayor Kawamura Takashi told Liu Zhiwei, a member of the Communist Party's Nanjing Standing Committee, that he doubted whether the 1937 Nanjing Massacre ever took place. Kawamura accepted that "conventional acts of combat" did occur but not the mass murder and rape of civilians attributed to the Imperial Army. Kawamura cited his father's kind treatment by citizens of Nanjing only eight years after the incident as a reason for his doubts that a massacre took place. He offered to go to Nanjing to debate the issue "if necessary." During the meeting, Liu did not challenge Kawamura's views and afterward the two shook hands and exchanged gifts. In Tokyo, Luo Zhaohui, director general of the Foreign Ministry's Asian Affairs Department, told his Japanese counterpart Sugiyama Shinsuke that Kawamura's remarks represented a "distortion of history."

In Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei cited "irrefutable evidence" that the massacre took place and opined that "some people in Japan should recognize that part of history correctly, face it squarely and draw a real lesson from it." In reaction to Kawamura's remarks, Nanjing announced a temporary suspension of official contact with Nagoya. At the same time, China's Foreign Ministry, after lodging a protest, made clear that Beijing was willing "to make efforts to further stabilize and develop relations with Japan."

Reacting to the suspension of official contact, Kawamura, on Feb. 22, released a statement that read "The friendly ties between the two cities remain unchanged. Such ties should also be maintained in the future. If you examine my remarks, you should see my real intention." He made clear that he had "no intention to withdraw or apologize" for his remarks. Later in the day, Nanjing informed Nagoya that civil exchanges between the two cities could continue.

As nationalist reaction among China's netizens exploded in response, the Nanjing government announced that it would suspend a commemorative China-Japan judo exhibition, featuring Los Angeles Olympics gold medal winner Yamashita Yasuhiro, scheduled for March 2. The event was to mark the second anniversary of the completion of the China-Japan judo stadium built with Japanese government aid. Also postponed was the scheduled March 9-11 "Japan Week in Nanjing," a cultural event that was to feature the Nagoya pop group SKE48. On March 2, Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura told reporters that he had heard that the event had been canceled out of concern for the safety of the performers but that efforts were underway to reschedule the event during the 40th anniversary year.

In Japan, Tokyo Gov. Ishihara Shintaro came to Kawamura's defense, telling reporters that "what Mr. Kawamura said is correct." He admitted that some atrocities were possibly committed during the war but that was different from saying that there was a large-scale massacre. Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura and Foreign Minister Gamba thought the issue should be resolved by the governments of the two cities. Prime Minister Noda expressed his hope that the matter be resolved "quickly in an appropriate manner." Back in Nagoya, Kawamura again refused to retract his statement, telling reporters that there was no factual evidence of an organized massacre of some 300,000 unarmed civilians. On Feb. 27, Aichi Prefecture Gov. Omura Hideaki, concerned with the downturn ties, told reporters that, as a personal friend, he had advised

Kawamura to “cool down the situation as quickly as possible and maintain the friendly relationship with the city of Nanjing.”

The *Sankei Shimbun* reported that Kawamura had sought to meet the Chinese ambassador to explain his views but that, through the Nagoya Consulate, he had denied his request, making it clear that “as long as the statement was not retracted, there could be no meeting.” During the National People’s Congress, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, on March 6, took up issues related to Nanjing and the Senkaku Islands. He said that in both cases the Japanese side had complicated the problems and that he wanted the Japanese side to understand the sensitivity of the issues and manage them from a broad perspective.

On March 7, Nanjing authorities announced that the restoration of official ties between the two sister cities would depend on Kawamura’s retraction and apology. The following day, Kawamura replied that his true meaning was misunderstood and that he would hold to what he had said.

Senkaku Islands

On the morning of Jan. 3, four members of the Ishigaki Municipal Assembly in Okinawa prefecture landed on Uotsuri Island. That evening, China’s Foreign Ministry protested the landing, reasserting China’s “indisputable sovereignty” over the Diaoyu Islands. The following day, Chinese protestors assembled in front of the Japanese Embassy in Beijing. To minimize the impact of the protest on bilateral relations, Chinese police worked to control the demonstration.

On Jan. 16, Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura announced the government’s intention to give names to a number of Japan’s distant islands, including four in the Senkakus. The following day, an opinion piece appearing in the *People’s Daily* proclaimed, for the first time, that the Diaoyu Islands were a “core interest” of China and cast the Japanese government’s action as “a blatant move to damage China’s core interests.” On Jan. 20, Hong Kong media reported that the Shanghai office of the State Oceanic Administration Agency had announced that it would initiate regular weekly patrols through the Diaoyu Islands.

Responding to a question about Japan’s intention to name uninhabited islands, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Liu Weimin told reporters that “Diaoyu Island and its affiliated islands have been China’s inherent territory since ancient times. China enjoys indisputable sovereignty over them.” Wen went on to make clear that “Any unilateral action of Japan over the Diaoyu Island and its affiliated islands is illegal and invalid.” Wen, however, did not use the term “core interest” in his remarks. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Gamba told the Upper House Budget Committee that the Senkaku Islands are an integral element of Japan’s national territory and that as a matter of course Japan would reject China’s unilateral understanding.

On Feb. 12, Japanese Coast Guard ships found two ships of China’s Maritime Fisheries Agency operating in Japan’s contiguous zone near the Senkakus. When challenged, the Chinese ships replied that they were engaged in regular patrol activities. On Feb. 15, a supra-party group of Diet members called on Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura and submitted a resolution that called on the government to strengthen Japan’s effective control over the islands. *Kyodo* reported that

the government was considering legislation to allow Coast Guard ships to order foreign ships to leave territorial waters without having to conduct onboard inspections, as required by existing law. On Feb. 21, Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura announced the government would introduce legislation to amend the Coast Guard law; the Cabinet approved the decision on Feb. 28.

Meanwhile, on Feb. 19, a patrol ship of China's State Oceanic Administration Agency ordered the Japanese Coast Guard research ship, *Shoyo*, to cease its research activities. The *Shoyo* was operating 110 km on the Japanese side of the mid-line boundary claimed by Japan in the East China Sea. On Feb. 20, Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura told reporters that the Coast Guard ship was conducting regular research and that Japan could not accept the Chinese ship's orders to cease its activities. He found China's demands "regrettable."

A similar incident occurred on Feb. 28 when a Chinese ship ordered the Japanese Coast Guard ship *Takuyo* to cease its activities. Responding the next day, Fujimura reiterated Japan's position, making it clear that research activities would continue and that the government had protested the incident through diplomatic channels. In Beijing, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei told reporters that China was "dissatisfied with Japan's repeated unilateral survey activities in disputed waters in the East China Sea in defiance of China's objections." Hong said that China had "required the Japanese to cease relevant activities immediately so as to avoid infringing on China's rights and interests...." On March 2, *Xinhua* reported that the State Oceanic Administration Agency (SOAA) would take steps to prevent Japan's illegal and unilateral research activities and to strengthen China's surveillance over the East China Sea.

On March 16, two ships belonging to China's SOAA, *Haijan 50* and *Haijan 66*, entered Japan's contiguous zone in the Senkakus, despite repeated warnings from a Japanese Coast Guard patrol boat. When asked by the Coast Guard the purpose of their activities, the Chinese ships replied that they were carrying out maritime patrol responsibilities in the Diaoyu Islands, which are part of China's territory. Vice Foreign Minister Saiki Kenichiro called in Chinese Ambassador to Japan Cheng Yonghua to protest the incident as "extremely serious" and "unacceptable."

In Beijing, the SOAA announced, on its home page, the beginning of regular patrol activities to support Chinese sovereignty and administration in the Diaoyu Islands. In an interview with *People's Daily*, SOAA authorities made clear that the purpose of the patrol activities was "to break" Japan's effective control over the islands. On the morning of April 5, Japanese Coast Guard spotted the *Haijan 202* and the *Haijan 32501* in Japan's contiguous zone in the Senkakus and warned against entering Japan's sovereign waters. Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura told reporters that the Chinese ships did not enter the area of Japanese sovereignty but that a diplomatic protest had been made.

Name the islands

On Jan. 16, the Noda government announced that, acting in accordance with the 2009 Basic Guidelines for Conservation and Management of Islands for Ocean Management, it intended to give names to 39 of Japan's 99 distant islands in an effort to strengthen Japan's EEZ claims, four of the islands being located within the Senkaku Island chain. On March 2, the Headquarters for

Oceanic Policy posted on the website of the Prime Minister's Office a statement that it had given names to 39 uninhabited islands in Japanese territorial waters, including four in the Senkakus: Hokuseigoshima, Kitagoshima, Hokutogoshima and Kitagoshima.

In reaction, China's SOAA, on March 3, announced that it had given names to 71 islands, including the Diaoyus, and China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei reiterated China's "indisputable" claim to the islands." Any unilateral action taken by Japan is "illegal and invalid." Lei emphasized that "no matter what names the Japanese side has given ... it cannot in any way alter the fact that these islands belong to China."

On March 6, Foreign Minister Gamba told a press conference that Japan found China's actions "extremely regrettable and had strongly protested." Tokyo again emphasized that the Senkaku Islands are part of Japan's national territory and, accordingly, a territorial problem "does not exist." On March 26, Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura told reporters that Japan had registered one of the Senkaku Islands as a national asset. The island was one of the four islands named on March 2. Three other islands remained under private ownership, and Fujimura thought it unlikely that other islands would be registered as national assets. Meanwhile, the *Sankei Shimbun* reported that China's *Legal Times* had called on the government to issue maps of disputed areas in the East China Sea and the South China Sea as clearly indicating the areas to be under Chinese sovereignty.

Buy the Islands

Tokyo Gov. Ishihara Shintaro, in remarks delivered at The Heritage Foundation in Washington DC on April 16, made news when he announced that the Tokyo Metropolitan Government was in negotiations to purchase three of the privately held Senkaku Islands from the owner. The aim of the purchase, Ishihara told his audience, was to protect Japanese territory. Taking a shot at the national government, he went on to say that the Tokyo Metropolitan Government will protect the Senkaku Islands and that no one should "have a problem" with Japan protecting its own territory.

At a press conference following his remarks, Ishihara asked "Don't you think this is a great idea? This will put the government in a predicament. The government has done absolutely nothing so far." Ishihara said that a basic agreement had been already reached with the private owner and that details were being worked out. Sources close to Ishihara reported that he looked to finalize the purchase in April 2013, when the government's lease expires. Following the purchase, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government would begin negotiations with the Okinawa Prefectural Government and the city of Ishigaki with respect to management of the islands.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura told reporters that "It is fully possible that we will proceed with such an idea if necessary," emphasizing that the Senkaku Islands "are an inherent part of Japanese territory." He indicated a willingness "to exchange views with the Tokyo Metropolitan Government if necessary." On April 18, during a meeting of the Lower House Budget Committee, Prime Minister Noda said that the government had been in contact with the private owner of the islands. As for the islands themselves, Noda reiterated that the Senkakus "are an integral part of Japan's sovereign territory in light of international law and history, and Japan

effectively controls them.” He added that his government “will consider everything while confirming the owner’s true intentions over recent developments.”

China’s Foreign Ministry issued a statement, making clear that “any unilateral action taken by Japan is illegal and invalid. The fact that these islands belong to China remains unchanged.” Foreign Ministry spokesperson Liu Weimin reiterated the government’s position that “the Diaoyu Islands have been China’s inherent territory since ancient times and China holds indisputable sovereignty over them.” Remarks, such as Ishihara’s “not only damage the overall state of China-Japan relations but also harm Japan’s international image.” On April 18, *Xinhua* observed that Ishihara’s remarks were aimed at “sabotaging China-Japan ties” at a time when the two countries were celebrating the 40th anniversary of normalization. Ishihara countered that the activities of Chinese ships in the Senkakus amounted to a “halfway declaration of war.”

As the story was developing, LDP Parliamentarian Santo Akiko told a press conference of her role in bringing together the owner of the islands and Ishihara. According to Santo, the owner, after being approached by an individual believed to be a Chinese national with an offer to buy the islands, had decided to sell the islands to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. Santo quoted the owner as saying that he had decided to sell the islands to Tokyo because “the current administration has no sense of protecting Japan’s national interests and has no sense of international politics.” Addressing the Ishihara initiative, Foreign Minister Gemba observed that “It’s only natural for the government to study every possible measure for the peaceful, stable maintenance and control of the Senkaku Islands” and that one of the measures could involve a decision to nationalize the islands.

On April 20, the mayor of Ishigaki city, Nakayama Yoshitaka, told the *Sankei Shimbun* that “we agree to everything Governor Ishihara has done.” On April 23, Nakayama met Ishihara to discuss details of the negotiations and expressed his support for their early conclusion. Meanwhile, Tokyo’s Vice Governor Inose Naoki raised the possibility of a national fundraising campaign to support the purchase of the islands. On April 24, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* reported that Ishihara had requested a meeting with Prime Minister Noda to exchange views on the purchase plan. Sources close to Ishihara told the *Yomiuri* that Ishihara would ask Noda for permission to land on the islands, by summer at the latest, in order to conduct surveys as the first step in the purchase plan. Noda met Ishihara on April 27. Afterward, Ishihara told reporters that talks focused on Japan-US base use issues; he did not discuss his Senkaku purchase plan. However, he also told reporters that he was in the process of assembling team to conduct surveys of the islands. Later, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government opened an account at the Mizuho Bank that would allow citizens to contribute toward the purchase of the three islands.

Earlier, on April 24, former Speaker of the Lower House Kono Yohei, leading a delegation from the Japan Association for the Promotion of International Trade, met Vice President Xi Jinping in the Great Hall of the People. Touching on the bilateral relationship, Xi told Kono that both countries should respect each other’s “core interests” and that “important matters should be handled appropriately. He urged continued cooperation to prevent problems from becoming “unmanageable.” He noted that in close relationships like the China-Japan relationship “it was only that natural problems were bound to arise from time to time. But, if goodwill and friendship exist, they can be resolved.”

On April 27, the press councilor at the Chinese Embassy in Tokyo addressed the Ishihara plan, telling reporters that the Diaoyu Islands “are inherently part of China” and that China’s determination to defend its sovereignty over the islands “is firm and unwavering.” He emphasized that, whatever unilateral actions Japan takes, they are “illegal and invalid” and cannot change the reality that the islands belong to China.

Security

On Jan. 19, the Ministry of Defense released figures on scrambles by the Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) from April to December 2011. In that period, the ASDF launched a total of 143 scrambles against Chinese aircraft, surpassing the 96 in 2010. The Southwest Composite Air Division, with jurisdiction over the East China Sea, experienced the sharpest increase. While there were no instances of Chinese aircraft entering Japanese airspace, many cases involved Chinese aircraft entering Japan’s air defense identification zone. For all of 2011 fiscal year (April 1-March 31) scrambles in response to Chinese aircraft totaled 156, an increase of 60 over fiscal year 2010. (Scrambles against Russian aircraft were 247, which put Russia in first place.) The Ministry of Defense released year-end figures on April 25.

Japan’s National Institute for Defense Studies released its 2011 China Security Report on Feb. 28. The report estimated there is a high possibility that China’s growing military strength could lead China to take assertive positions in both the South China Sea and East China Sea and expressed concern over the growing strength of the PLA within the Chinese government. The report emphasized the need to pay close attention to the activities of the PLA Navy in waters around Japan. China’s Ministry of Defense found the report reflected deep suspicions toward the PLA and charged it exaggerated the “China threat” and exerted a negative influence on the development of China-Japan relations and the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region

On March 4, China released its 2012 defense budget. Figures indicated an 11.2 percent increase in defense spending over 2011, amounting to \$106.39 billion. Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura observed that “there are some parts in the breakdown of China’s defense budget that are unclear, and it is desirable to boost transparency in the defense budget and China’s defense policies.” Minister of Defense Tanaka Naoki said that China’s lack of transparency is becoming a matter of concern to Japan, the Asia-Pacific region, and the international community.

On March 18, Prime Minister Noda told the graduating class of Japan’s National Defense Academy that “Circumstances in our surrounding regions are increasingly severe, complicated, and remain uncertain.” He noted that China “is reinforcing its military capabilities and continuing activities in surrounding waters.” Similar concerns with China were reflected in the Foreign Ministry’s Bluebook, issued on April 6. At the same time, the Bluebook recognized that “China’s involvement is indispensable for building order in the Asia-Pacific region.”

East China Sea

After detecting drilling-related activities in the Kashi (Tianwaitian) natural gas field at the end of January, Tokyo lodged a diplomatic protest on Jan. 31. The next day, Chief Cabinet Secretary

Fujimura told reporters that “China’s unilateral development is unacceptable, when the two countries have yet to agree on the maritime boundary.” Fujimura explained that flames being emitted from the site suggested that it was highly likely that China was extracting oil. Tokyo asked for an early resumption of negotiations on joint development of the East China Sea. On Feb. 3, *Xinhua* reported that China’s Foreign Ministry had responded that the Tianwaitian field was indisputably in waters under China’s jurisdiction and that development was proper and reasonable.

On April 3, *Kyodo* reported that China had proposed joint China-Japan marine environmental protection projects in the East China Sea as a step toward reducing tensions in the area and that the two governments are studying possible joint projects.

High-level meetings

On March 23, Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Secretary General Koshiishi Azuma led a delegation of parliamentarians to Beijing to participate in a conference of Japanese and Chinese legislators. On arrival, Koshiishi met Vice President Xi for 50 minutes in the Great Hall of the People, where he urged the early resumption of negotiations on joint development of the East China Sea natural gas fields. In reply, Xi called for talks at the working level and for the creation of conditions that would allow for the early resumption of negotiations. Koshiishi also touched on the issues of history, citing the 1995 Murayama statement and emphasizing that Japan has thoroughly embraced the cause of peace. Xi answered that both China and Japan should face the future, using history as a mirror.

Koshiishi also met with Li Yuanho, head of the Organization Department in the Central Committee. According to a source who attended the meeting, Li said he was concerned that a “small point of friction in the East China Sea might escalate into a huge bilateral issue” in light of the growing anti-Japanese sentiment among China’s netizens, pointing to the controversy that erupted following Nagoya Mayor Kawamura’s remarks on Nanjing as an example.

On March 24, Koshiishi announced the signing of a memorandum that called for the installation of a “hotline” between the DPJ and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials. In making the announcement, Koshiishi said “We are preparing to communicate with governments accurately through various channels over the issue of the disputed Senkaku Islands and possible launch of a missile by North Korea.”

On April 8, the foreign ministers of Japan, China, and the Republic of Korea met in Ningbo China. Afterward, Gemba said that the three “were able to increase our common view, but, frankly speaking, I would not say the three countries completely shared the same view.” Asked if China shared the view that the North Korean satellite launch would be a violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1874, Gemba declined to answer, citing the “sensitivity” of the issue for China. The ministers, however, agreed to work toward the start of free trade negotiations in advance of the May trilateral summit.

In bilateral talks with China on April 7, Gemba asked Foreign Minister Yang for China’s cooperation in dealing with North Korea. According to a press release issued by China’s

Foreign Ministry, Yang told Gemba that China “is concerned and worried” and called for all parties to “keep calm and exercise restraint in light of the overall situation and long-term benefits, continue dialogues and properly resolve relevant issues through peaceful ways.”

At the end of the month Tang Jiaxuan, China’s head of the China-Japan Friendship Association, visited Japan. In Tokyo, on April 25, Tang met Japanese counterpart Kato Koichi and parliamentarians from the Komeito Party. While he felt trends in the bilateral relationship were positive overall, he also called attention to those “whose remarks appear to have the objective of worsening China-Japan relations.” To build a stable relationship, he observed that such problems should be addressed before something happens.

On April 26, Tang met Prime Minister Noda, who took the occasion to say that the 40th anniversary year offered a great opportunity to advance exchanges between the two peoples, to deepen mutual understanding and, in doing so, to strengthen ties. Tang said that Prime Minister Wen Jiabao looked forward to welcoming Noda to China in May. The Ishihara purchase plan was not a subject of discussion.

Looking Ahead

The big question going forward is will April showers bring May flowers when Prime Minister Noda visits China?

Chronology of Japan – China Relations Japan – April 2012

Jan. 3, 2012: Four members of Ishigaki Municipal Assembly land on the disputed island of Uotsuri – known to the Chinese as Diaoyu.

Jan. 6, 2012: Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura Osamu rebukes Consumer Affairs Minister Yamaoka Kenji for remarks on the possible bursting of China’s economic bubble.

Jan. 7, 2012: China invites Crown Prince Naruhito and Crown Princess Masako to visit China to celebrate the 40th anniversary of normalization.

Jan. 16, 2012: Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura announces the government’s intention to give names to Japan’s distant islands, including four in the Senkakus.

Jan. 16, 2012: Japanese and Chinese parliamentarians meet in Beijing for seventh meeting of parliamentary dialogue.

Jan. 17, 2012: *People’s Daily* proclaims the Diaoyu Islands to be a “core interest” of China.

Jan. 27, 2012: *Kyodo* reports China’s Maritime Safety Administration plans to increase reconnaissance flights over disputed areas in the East China Sea.

Jan. 31, 2012: Tokyo files a diplomatic protest concerning Chinese activities in the Tianwaitan natural gas field.

Feb. 1, 2012: Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura states that China's unilateral development of the East China natural gas fields is unacceptable

Feb. 3, 2012: Beijing responds that Tianwaitan gas field is indisputably within Chinese waters.

Feb. 12, 2012: Japanese Coast Guard ships find Chinese Maritime Fisheries Agency ships operating in Japan's contiguous zone near the Senkaku Islands.

Feb. 15, 2012: Supra-party delegation of Diet members calls on the Japanese government to take measures to strengthen Japan's effective control over the Senkaku Islands.

Feb. 16, 2012: China and Japan agree to extend until 2022 the final elimination of chemical weapons abandoned in China by the Imperial Army.

Feb. 16, 2012: Ceremonies marking the 40th anniversary of normalization are held in Beijing.

Feb. 19, 2012: Chinese State Oceanic Administration Agency (SOAA) orders a Japanese Coast Guard research ship to cease activities in waters on the Japanese side of Japan's claimed mid-line boundary in the East China Sea.

Feb. 20, 2012: Leaders of Nagoya-Nanjing sister cities meet in Nagoya; Mayor Kawamura Takashi expresses doubts over Nanjing massacre.

Feb. 21, 2012: Nanjing announces temporary suspension of official contact with Nagoya.

Feb. 22, 2012: Mayor Kawamura says his remarks on the Nanjing massacre were misunderstood and refuses to withdraw or apologize. Nanjing says civil exchanges can continue.

Feb. 24, 2012: "Genki Nihon" exhibition opens in Beijing as part of ceremonies to mark 40th anniversary of normalization.

Feb. 28, 2012: Japan's National Institute for Defense Studies releases China Security Report.

Feb. 28, 2012: China's SOAA ship orders Japanese Coast Guard ship to stop research activities.

Feb. 29, 2012: Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura states that research activities will continue and announces a diplomatic protest. China says it is dissatisfied with Japan's unilateral activities.

March 1, 2012: Prime Minister Noda calls for Nagoya-Nanjing matter to be resolved quickly in an appropriate manner.

March 2, 2012: Japan gives names to 39 distant islands, including four in the Senkaku Islands; Taiwan protests.

March 3, 2012: China announces it has given names to 71 islands, including Diaoyu Islands.

March 5, 2012: The seventh Korea-Japan-China Senior Foreign Affairs Officials' Consultation and the first Asian Policy Dialogue are held in Beijing.

March 6, 2012: Foreign Minister Gamba Koichiro finds China's decision to give names to Senkaku Islands extremely regrettable; announces a diplomatic protest.

March 6, 2012: Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi calls on Japan to understand the sensitivity of history and Diaoyu issues and to manage them appropriately.

March 7, 2012: Nanjing authorities state that restoration of official sister-to-sister ties will depend on a Kawamura apology.

March 8, 2012: Kawamura replies that his true meaning was misunderstood and refuses to withdraw remarks.

March 9, 2012: Minister of Defense Tanaka announces appointment of Keio University professor and China scholar Kokubun Ryosei to head the National Defense Academy.

March 12, 2012: *People's Daily* publishes Prime Minister Noda's appreciation for China's assistance following the 2011 tsunami-Fukushima disaster.

March 12, 2012: US, EU, and Japan bring China's restrictions on rare earth exports to the World Trade Organization.

March 13, 2012: Japanese Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Edano Yukio expresses dissatisfaction with China's protection of trademarks.

March 13, 2012: Foreign Minister Gamba says Japan has no intention to turn China's restrictions on rare earth exports into a political issue.

March 15, 2012: Okinawan citizens' judicial panel indicts, in absentia, Chinese captain of fishing boat involved in September 2010 Senkaku incident.

March 16, 2012: Chinese ships *Haijan 50* and *Haijan 66* enter Japan's contiguous zone in the Senkaku Islands.

March 18, 2012: Prime Minister Noda expresses concerns over China's growing military capabilities in an address to National Defense Academy graduates.

March 23, 2012: Democratic Party of Japan Secretary General Koshiishi Azuma leads a DPJ delegation to Beijing and meets Vice President Xi Jinping and Li Yuancho, head of the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee Organization Department.

March 26, 2012: Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura announces that Japan has registered one of the Senkaku Islands as a national asset.

March 31, 2012: *Xinhua* reports an agreement between China's National Library and Shanghai Transport University to establish a Center for the Study of the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal.

April 5, 2012: Japanese Coast Guard finds two Chinese ships operating within Japan's contiguous zone in the Senkaku Islands.

April 6, 2012: Japanese Foreign Ministry releases its annual Diplomatic Bluebook.

April 7, 2012: Japanese and Chinese foreign ministers meet in Ningbo, China.

April 7, 2012: Japanese and Chinese finance ministers meet in Tokyo.

April 8, 2012: Japanese, Chinese, and ROK foreign ministers meet in Ningbo, China.

April 12, 2012: Fixed-wing aircraft of SOAA approaches Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) ship in East China Sea. China defends the action as being in accordance with international regulations and part of regular flight activities.

April 16, 2012: Tokyo Gov. Ishihara Shintaro announces that the Tokyo Municipal Government is negotiating to purchase three of the privately owned Senkaku Islands.

April 19, 2012: China's Foreign Ministry reiterates China's claim to the Diaoyu Islands.

April 19, 2012: Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Ishihara Nobuteru, son of Tokyo governor, announces postponement of his scheduled visit to China.

April 20, 2012: Supra-party delegation of 81 parliamentarians visits the Yasukuni Shrine in advance of Spring Festival; no Cabinet members are among the group.

April 20, 2012: Japan National Tourist Organization reports a 5.7 percent increase in tourists from China in March, a total of 130,000 visitors.

April 21, 2012: Chinese and Japanese citizens plant 1,000 trees in Beijing as part of ceremonies marking 40th anniversary of normalization; Ambassador Niwa and Chairman of the China-Japan Friendship Association Tang Jiaxuan participate.

April 24, 2012: Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs Kono Yohei meets Vice President Xi Jinping in Beijing.

April 27, 2012: Tokyo Metropolitan Government opens an account at Mizuho Bank to allow citizens to contribute toward purchase of Senkaku Islands.