

Various Misleading Facts

The Origins of U.S. Policy in the East China Sea Islands Dispute: Okinawa's Reversion and the Senkaku Islands by Robert D. Eldridge. London: Routledge, 2014, 376 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-62926-3 \$160.00 (hardcover)

Japan's nationalization of the Diaoyu Islands in 2012¹ reignited the Sino–Japanese territorial dispute that had been relatively quiet since the 1970s, making news headlines yet again. Renewed attention to the dispute prompted the publication of a number of books in Japan and China, including this book, claiming to be ‘the first academic book in more than a decade focusing exclusively on the Senkaku issue....’ (p. 15). While Eldridge's book has some positive points, such as addressing declassified information relating to the Diaoyu Islands in the period between the San Francisco Peace Treaty (SFPT) in 1951 and the Reversion Treaty in 1971, the book has some critical shortcomings.

America's 'Neutrality' policy

The author notes that the book does not address contemporary issues, such as sovereignty and security, but rather aims at ‘the negotiations over the handling of the ... Senkaku Island’ (p. ix), focusing on America's ‘neutrality’ policy. In discussing America's ‘neutrality’ policy, however, the book simply lays out a narrative description of chronological events, failing to fully evaluate US policy and practice. The book fails to look into important ‘evidence’ demonstrating that the inclusion of the Diaoyu Island as Japanese territory was the result of American error. While the USA did follow a ‘neutrality’ policy, the author's assessment ignores important and extremely nuanced factors of this very complex issue. Historical evidence demonstrates that ‘war committees’ including the SWNCC (State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee) negatively impacted

1 For simplification, I hereinafter refer to the Diaoyu Islands. It does not mean that the Chinese have the ultimate sovereignty over the Diaoyu Islands.

the sovereignty of the Diaoyu Islands by including it as part of Okinawa as ‘Nansei Shotō south of 29° North latitude’ because Washington used the 1939 Japan map, which was created before the American military landed on Okinawa. The mistake was subsequently reflected in the two wartime Declarations – Potsdam (1945) and Cairo (1941), subsequently incorporated into the SFPT defining Japan’s national boundary and included in the Reversion Treaty. Indeed, even Henry Kissinger admitted in a conversation with Zhou Enlai on February 15, 1973 that the United States ‘probably made several mistakes in the 1950s’. Moreover, recent research by Japanese scholar, Yakuki Susumu, demonstrates that America’s *soi-disant* ‘neutral’ position was impacted by political considerations. Declassified information from Taiwan’s archives demonstrated that the ROC (Republic of China) requested that Washington bomb the Diaoyu Islands in military exercises because Taiwan accepted the textile demands from Washington as a demonstration of its ‘neutral’ position.²

Unreasonably biased

Eldridge’s writing is unreasonably biased toward the Japanese nationalist point of view, failing to provide an impartial study of the Diaoyu issue. The author notes that ‘[m]y own view is that the USG should have sided with Japan...’ (p. 310). To support his claims, Eldridge relies overwhelmingly on writings of the Japanese nationalist Okuhara Toshiho and fails to point to official Japanese documents, which are publically available at *Nihon gaikō monjo* [Japan diplomatic documents] and/or Kokuritsu kōbunshokan [National archive of Japan] (<http://www.jacar.go.jp/>). Eldridge ignores work by preminent Chinese scholars on the issue, such as Ma Ying-jeou, the current president of the ROC, and a famous scholar on the Islands, and Chiu Hungdah, a long time Sino–Japanese territorial dispute observer.

The author also criticizes views in *Sovereign Rights and Territorial Space in Sino–Japanese Relations: Irredentism and the Diaoyu/Senkaku*

2 Yabuki Susumu, *Senkaku shōtotsu wa Okinawa henkan ni hajimaru* [The dispute over the Senkaku Islands started with the return of Okinawa] (Tokyo: Kadensha, 2013), p. 48. A part of Yabuki’s book has been published in the English article, ‘The Origins of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Disputed between China, Taiwan, and Japan’. See Yabuki Susumu and Mark Selden, *Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 12, issue 2, no. 3 (January 13, 2014): at <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Mark-Selden/4061>.

Islands published in 2000 by the current reviewer: ‘Suganuma, criticizes ... Imperial Edict No. 13 ... with respect to the sovereignty of the disputed Diaoyu Islands’ (pp. 35–6). Although I acknowledge that this view is ‘technically’ correct, Eldridge merely references the views of Okuhara. The author’s assertion, however, provides absolutely no support for his views based upon international law, because there is none. The *soi-disant* 75-year ‘effective control’ on the Diaoyu Islands by Japan is not sufficient under customary international law to acquire new territory;³ especially as is the case here where there was no ‘formal notice’ or ‘announcement’ that put China on notice of the taking of this land.⁴ Eldridge’s study of this issue also falls short in that he fails to address the Japanese government’s inconsistent incorporation of the Diaoyu Islands and confusion on the part of many Japanese politicians over the difference between ‘administrative rights’ and ‘sovereign rights’ over the these Islands.⁵

Various misleading facts

The book contains numerous errors in citations and incorrect information. I would also like to question the credibility of interviews referenced in the book. I note that the interviews were not with ‘major’ decision-makers in Washington relating to the treaties of 1951 and 1971. All decision-makers, including John Foster Dulles and Richard Nixon, have already deceased, and the author did not interview Henry Kissinger, who is still alive.

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3 The Liuqiu Islands, along with the Diaoyu Islands, were in control by the USA under United Nations trusteeship between 1945 and 1972. See Ivy Lee and Fang Ming, ‘Deconstructing Japan’s Claim of Sovereignty over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands’, *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, vol. 10, issue 53, no. 1 (December 31, 2012): <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Fang-Ming/3877> (April 30, 2014 date last accessed).

4 Murata Tadayoshi, *Nitchu ryōdo mondai no kigen* [The origins of Sino-Japanese territorial issue] (Tokyo: Kadensha, 2013), p. 37.

5 Yabuki, *Senkaku shōtotsu wa Okinawa*, pp. 132–64.