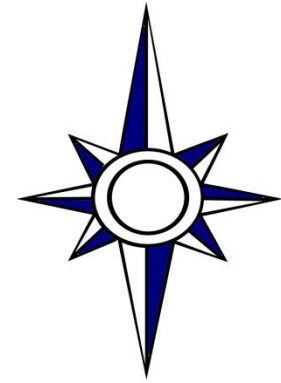


Comparative Connections

A Triannual E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations



Japan-China Relations: Past as Prologue

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History dominated the Japan-China relationship in the early months of 2014. Controversies over the Yasukuni Shrine, the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, Ahn Jung-geun, the Kono and Murayama Statements, Nanjing, compensation for wartime forced labor, and China's seizure of a Mitsui ship over a wartime-related contract dispute marked the four months, ending almost where the year began with Prime Minister Abe making an offering to the Yasukuni Shrine during the spring festival. Meanwhile, Chinese Coast Guard ships continued to operate on an almost daily basis in Japan's contiguous zone in the Senkakus, occasionally entering territorial waters. In response, Japan continued to strengthen the presence of the Self-Defense Forces in Okinawa and the southwest islands.

History: Yasukuni

On the morning of Dec. 26, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo paid homage at the Yasukuni Shrine. In a contribution to the *Mainichi Shimbun*, China's Ambassador Cheng Yonghua defined Abe's visit as both a "political and diplomatic issue," bearing not only on Japan's past but its future as well. China had "no objection to private citizens mourning their deceased relatives, but a visit by Japan's leader ... is an issue bearing on Japan's perception of the nature of the war of aggression and responsibility for that war." Abe's visit was "absolutely unacceptable to China." As for the prime minister's post-visit statement pledging his commitment to "everlasting peace" Cheng wrote "the Yasukuni Shrine is the wrong place to pledge everlasting peace." The issue is "absolutely not just a domestic political issue or a personal matter"; China hoped that "Japanese politicians realize the nature of the problem..."

The aftershocks carried into the new year, as Chinese and Japanese ambassadors contributed dueling op-eds in newspapers across the globe. In a Jan. 1 op-ed in the *Daily Telegraph*, China's Ambassador to the United Kingdom Liu Xiaoming cast militarism as the "haunting Voldemort of Japan" and the Yasukuni Shrine as "a kind of horcrux representing the darkest parts of that nation's soul." In reply, Japan's Ambassador Hayashi Keiichi posed China's choices as either to "seek dialogue and abide by the rule of law" or "play the role of Voldemort in the region by letting loose the evil of an arms race and escalation of tensions...."

* 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.

Polling on Abe's Yasukuni visit revealed a split decision on the visit itself, but an increase in support for the Abe government following the visit. In a *Kyodo* public opinion poll, taken Dec. 28, support for the Abe government increased 1 percent, while support for the visit was equally divided, 47.1 percent opposed and 43.1 percent in support. A *Tokyo Shimbun* poll, conducted Dec. 28-29, revealed similar results: 43.2 percent of respondents supported the visit; 47.1 percent opposed. However, support for the Abe government increased from 54 percent to 55 percent. In a *Sankei Shimbun* poll, conducted Jan. 4-5, support for the prime minister increased to 52.1 percent up 4.7 percent from the previous mid-December survey, while 53 percent of respondents opposed the Yasukuni visit and 38.1 percent supported it. A *Yomiuri Shimbun* poll, conducted Jan. 10-12 revealed similar results: 45 percent supported the visit while 47 percent opposed. In a Jan. 25-26 poll conducted by the *Asahi Shimbun*, 41 percent of respondents supported the visit and 46 percent opposed it.

On Jan. 14, Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio told a press conference that the prime minister's visit to Yasukuni Shrine should not be made into a political and diplomatic issue. As for the Kono and Murayama Statements, Kishida pointed out that the Abe government had maintained both statements. The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson took issue with Kishida's presentation, saying that "we get the distinct impression that the Japanese government deliberately evades the history of militaristic aggression, shuts its eyes to the severe damage caused by Abe's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine ... and always takes the Kono Statement and the Murayama Statement as its shield." He said "What Abe has done has denied the spirit of the Kono Statement and the Murayama Statement. The Japanese side always says one thing and does another on historical issues."

Prime Minister Abe meanwhile continued to maintain that it is only natural for the leader of a country to pay his respects to those who had sacrificed their lives on behalf of their country and that he would continue to pray for their happiness in the next world. At the same time, he regretted that his visit had become a diplomatic and political issue. However, he declined to say whether he would visit the shrine in the future.

Abe did not visit the shrine during the April 21-23 spring festival, electing to send a plant offering instead. On April 22, 146 members of the Diet visited the shrine however, along with Cabinet members Furuya Keiji and Internal Affairs Minister Shindo Yoshitaka. China's response was to cast the Shrine as "a relationship wrecker a negative asset," which "if the Japanese leader is bent on holding the negative asset, the amount will only get bigger as time goes by." Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide found such criticism to be "inappropriate."

History: Senkakus

At the end of January, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Technology instructed Japanese junior and senior high schools to use newly revised instruction manuals and textbooks teaching that the Senkakus and Takeshima are "integral parts of Japan's territory." Minister of Education Hakubun Shimomura told a press conference that "it is natural for a state to teach its children about integral parts of its own territory." In Beijing, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson expressed China's "grave concerns" and announced that China had made "solemn representations" with the Japanese side. She went on to emphasize that the Diaoyu Islands have

been China's territory since ancient times, commenting that "no matter how it racks its brain to propagandize for its erroneous position ... Japan cannot change the basic fact that the Diaoyu Islands belong to China."

Appearing on Feb. 4 television news program, former Minister of Defense Morimoto Satoshi and former Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Tanaka Hitoshi called for close cooperation with the US to deal with China's repeated challenges to Japanese sovereignty in the Senkakus.

A month later on March 8, during the National People's Congress (NPC), Foreign Minister Wang Yi told reporters that China could find no room for compromise on issues related to history and sovereignty. He noted that the present state of bilateral relations did not comport with the interests of both China and Japan, but went on to point out that the recent actions of Japan's leaders with respect to history, Taiwan, and the Diaoyu Islands had violated the spirit of and shattered the common understandings that had served as the foundation of normalization.

On April 4, Japan's Ministry of Education announced that beginning in April 2015 all elementary school textbooks would include references to territorial issues related to the Senkakus and Takeshima. At the same time, Japan's *2014 Diplomatic Blue Book* reasserted Japanese claims to the Senkakus. In Beijing, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson told reporters that the Blue Book "maliciously hypes up the so-called China threat" and that it is "no one else but Japan that stirs up trouble and changes the status quo of the Diaoyu Islands and the East China Sea with unilateral actions." As for the textbook references, he observed that China had been "requiring Japan to face up to history with honesty and teach the next generation with a correct conception of history ... and should tell younger generations what is true about the Diaoyu Islands." Subsequently, Tokyo announced that it would shortly release a pamphlet on the Senkaku Islands. Under the heading "China's Challenge," the document asserts that China "made its claim to the islands for the first time after the possibility of oil reserves was mentioned."

History: Ahn Jung-geun

China opened a memorial on Jan. 19 in the Harbin railroad station to honor Anh Jung-geun, a Korean resistance leader, who assassinated Japan's Governor-General of Korea Ito Hirobumi on Oct. 26, 1909. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga called Anh a "terrorist" who had been sentenced to death for his crime and asserted that "Korea and China holding hands and spreading groundless assertions ... based on a unilateral view will not be helpful to the peace and cooperative relations of this region." Responding to Suga's remarks, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson called Anh "an upholder of justice who fought against Japan's aggression." Rhetorically, the spokesperson asked if Ahn were to be considered a terrorist "what about the 14 Class-A war criminal honored in the Yasukuni Shrine?"

History: Kono and Murayama Statements

During a Lower House meeting of Jan. 24, Prime Minister Abe, addressing the Kono and Murayama Statements, acknowledged that Japan "had caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly Asian nations" He went on to reaffirm that "the

Abe Cabinet shares the view and upholds the positions of the previous Cabinet.” Abe reiterated his government’s position during an Upper House Budget Committee hearing on March 3.

As controversy over a review of the Kono Statement continued to build, Abe told the Upper House Budget Committee on March 14 that “I am deeply pained to think of the comfort women who experienced immeasurable pain and suffering, a feeling I share with my predecessors.” The prime minister stated “I am not thinking of revising (the Statement) under my Cabinet.” Abe added that his Cabinet would continue to hold to the Murayama Statement and that historical problems should not become political or diplomatic issues but should be left to historians.

Two days later, Premier Li Keqiang joined the history debate telling the opening session of the NPC that China would not permit any country to “reverse the course of history.” Responding, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga told reporters that Japan is not about to reverse the course of history – that since the end of the war Japan had consistently followed the path of freedom, peace and democracy. He then called attention to China’s 12.2 percent increase in defense spending, the fourth consecutive year of a double-digit increase, noting that China’s defense policy and lack of transparency are “raising international concerns.”

In mid-March, Haguida Koichi, special advisor to Prime Minister Abe suggested that if the Kono review team discover new facts, the government should issue a new statement on the comfort women issue. On March 24, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga made clear that would not happen, telling reporters that Abe had repeatedly said that the Kono Statement would not be revised; “that explains it all.” Suga pointed out that Haguida was speaking as an individual in his private capacity, whereas his statement reflected official government policy. Two days later, Minister of Education Shimoura took issue with Suga and the prime minister, asserting that Abe’s March 14 statement did not reflect “a unified government position.”

In an April 8 interview with the *New York Times*, Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio addressed the continuing discussion of the comfort women issue and the Kono Statement. Kishida observed that “criticism about historical revisionism is coming because people who are not members of the government are making outlandish remarks, and these are then understood as being the historical views of the Abe Cabinet.” He found this to be “unfortunate and regrettable” and emphasized that the prime minister and his government “are firmly continuing the views on history, and the position on history of previous administrations.”

History: Nanjing

Nanjing resurfaced as a history issue when on Feb. 3, Hyakuta Naoki, a member of the NHK Board of Governors, denied the reality of the Nanjing Massacre. China’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson found Hyakuta’s remarks to be a “blatant challenge to international justice and human conscience, representing efforts by a “handful of people in Japan ... to blot out, cover up and distort that history.” Meanwhile, the Standing Committee of the NPC debated proposals to create new national holidays: Sept. 3, as “victory in the war of resistance against Japan day” and Dec. 13 as “national memorial day for the victims of the Nanjing Massacre.”

On March 28, in an address delivered in Berlin, President Xi returned to Nanjing, asserting that Japan's Imperial Army was responsible for the deaths of 300,000 residents of the city, a memory still "fresh" in Chinese minds. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga found Xi's remarks, made in a third country, to be "extremely unproductive." Suga said the Japanese government is not denying the reality of the Nanjing Massacre but that differences remained over the number of lives lost. The Foreign Ministry called in the counselor of the Chinese Embassy to protest Xi's remarks.

On April 4, *Kyodo* reported that the Nanjing municipal government was considering designating as cultural sites the buildings used as comfort stations.

History: forced labor

A group of 37 Chinese plaintiffs filed suit on Feb. 26 in People's Intermediate Court in Beijing, seeking damages of \$163,000 per plaintiff from Mitsubishi Materials Corporation and Mitsui Mining for wartime forced labor. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga told a press conference that issues of liability had been resolved at the time of normalization. In mid-March, *Jiji Press* reported that the court had agreed to hear the plaintiff's suit. On March 25, Foreign Minister Kishida told the Upper House Foreign Policy and Defense Committee that the court's action would unavoidably cast a deep shadow on the Japan-China economic relations and give rise to similar legal proceedings. He reiterated that the suit lacked legal standing and all issues regarding reparations had been settled by the 1972 agreement on normalization.

History: wartime maritime compensation

The Shanghai Maritime Court approved the impoundment of the Mitsui ship *Baosteel Emotion* on April 18. The Court found for the Chinese plaintiffs seeking compensation for two ships chartered from China's Chung Wei Steamship Company and lost during the war. In 2010, a Chinese court had awarded plaintiff's approximately \$28 million in compensation. Subsequent out-of-court negotiations with Mitsui failed to produce agreement, and, in December 2013, the plaintiffs asked the court for an impoundment order, which the Court executed when the *Baosteel Emotion* arrived near Shanghai.

As in the forced-labor suit, Tokyo maintained that all reparations claims were resolved at the time of normalization and that, accordingly, no issue exists. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga said that the seizure could not help but have "a chilling effect" on Japanese companies operating in China, adding "we are deeply apprehensive and expect China to take appropriate measures." China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson cast the dispute as "an ordinary one involving commercial contract disputes, having "nothing to do with reparations." He went to reassure foreign businesses operating in China that "China will continue to protect the lawful rights of foreign-invested enterprises in China."

On April 21, Mitsui O.S.K. Lines released a statement, noting that "the company, while contacting the maritime court, had been calling on the plaintiff to hold out-of-court negotiations to reach a settlement. But the ship was seized without prior notice." On April 24, the *Mainichi Shimbun* reported that Mitsui had paid over ¥2.9 billion plus interest, totaling an estimated ¥4 billion to the plaintiffs as directed by court order.

Prime Minister Abe

During his first press conference of 2014 on Jan. 6, Prime Minister Abe, emphasized the importance of public debate on the revision of Japan's constitution. Abe characterized Japan's relations with China and Korea as being of great importance for regional peace and stability. While acknowledging that prospects for dialogue were not promising because of difficult problems, he nevertheless wanted to hold "open discussions without preconditions." Reiterating that "the door to dialogue is always open," he added that he wanted to explain his visits to the Yasukuni Shrine "sincerely and directly" to the leaders of China and South Korea.

Commenting on Abe's remark, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson accused Abe of "playing a double game in China-Japan relations." In visiting the Yasukuni Shrine, he had disregarded China's "firm opposition ... and "severely damaged the political foundations of China-Japan relations. The spokesperson observed that "judging from his moves, we can easily notice that Abe is hypocritical when he pays lip service to improving relations with China. In fact it is Abe himself who shuts the door on dialogue with Chinese leaders."

On January 22, following his address to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Prime Minister Abe met with the International Media Council. Responding to a question on the possibility of military conflict between China and Japan, Abe noted that close economic ties had existed between Germany and England in the years before World War I and reiterated the importance of communication between Japan and China to avoid such consequences.

However, a representative of the *Financial Times* attending the media session tweeted Abe's remarks as not denying the possibility of a China-Japan conflict. In response, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga spoke to the details of Abe's remarks, acknowledging that Abe had touched on the possibility of conflict between Japan and China but making the point that it was therefore critical to work to prevent such a situation from again arising. Suga explained that Abe wanted to emphasize that conditions such as those that led to the outbreak of the war could only be resolved through diplomacy.

Asked to respond to Abe's remarks at Davos, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson replied "if his analogy suggests that some country is going to challenge the existing international order, then I want to remind you that the Japanese leader's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine and a blatant whitewash and denial of Japan's history of aggression and colonial rule indicate that Japan attempts to negate the outcome of World War II and the post-war international order."

On Jan. 23, Abe addressed a New Year's greeting to Chinese residents of Japan, which acknowledged the existence of a number of individual issues between the two countries, but called for a return to the mutually beneficial strategic relationship to control such issues from affecting the overall bilateral relationship. The message also emphasized the importance of high-level dialogue. The next day, Abe delivered his policy address to the Diet and reaffirmed the basic principles of a mutually beneficial strategic relationship with China and reiterated his call for a high-level meeting. He also called for greater transparency in China's military buildup. Regarding the Senkakus, the prime minister made clear that Japan would deal "firmly but in a

calm manner” with the incursion of Chinese ships into Japan’s territorial waters and with China’s proclamation of an air defense identification zone (ADIZ) over the East China Sea, emphasizing that “I will never accept any attempt to alter the status quo by force.”

China’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson reacted to the New Year’s greeting and the policy address by observing that “if the Japanese leader wishes the Chinese and China-Japan relations the best, then nothing is better than declaring that I will pull back from the precipice, immediately admit and correct mistakes and make no more visits to the Yasukuni Shrine.” As for the policy address, he said that China is “strongly dissatisfied” with Abe’s groundless accusations.” And, as for high-level dialogue, he charged that it was Abe’s own action that has “shut the door on dialogue with China.”

At the same time, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, in an interview with the *Financial Times*, said the Yasukuni Shrine “was without a doubt a militarist symbol before World War II”; that “even today the Shrine openly claims that Japan’s past aggression was justified; that the Pacific War was waged for self-defense; that the trial by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East was illegal;” and that it “still honors 14 Class-A war criminals as divine spirits.” Wang asked rhetorically “Is that an appropriate place for a Japanese leader to visit?”

Asked to comment on reports that Abe had compared the present state of Japan-China relations to those between England and Germany in the period before World War I, Wang replied, that Abe’s remarks “struck me as total disorder of time and space, making no sense at all.” He found bilateral relations to be “very bad right now,” but was cautiously optimistic that “things tend to bounce back when they reach the bottom.” Yet, he noted that bilateral trade had declined over the past year, and, while economic relations remained “normal as a whole,” he called on friends in Japanese business circles to speak up to arrest the decline and “to stop behaviors that undermine relations and trust between China and Japan or even turn back the wheel of history.”

Senkakus

Regular Chinese patrols in the Diaoyu/Senkaku region have become the new normal in 2014. Throughout the first four months, the Japanese reported regular incursions by China’s Coast Guard ships into Japan’s claimed contiguous zone and territorial waters. Chinese aircraft were also reported as penetrating the Japan ADIZ in an apparent attempt to demonstrate the capability of patrolling China’s own declared ADIZ. Below is a summary of activity:

Jan. 5: Chinese Coast Guard ships *Haijian 2112*, *2151*, and *2337* temporarily entered Japan’s territorial waters in the Senkakus; China’s State Oceanic Administration claimed that the ships were operating in Chinese waters.

Jan. 6: *Haijian 2113*, *2166*, *2350* and *2506* entered Japan’s contiguous zone in the Senkakus. They did not respond to Japanese Coast Guard warnings not to enter Japan’s territorial waters.

Jan. 7: Chinese Coast Guard aircraft entered Japan’s ADIZ, approaching to within 140 km of Japan’s sovereign airspace over the Senkakus; Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF) aircraft scrambled from Naha air base; the Chinese plane did not enter Japan’s sovereign air space.

Jan. 12: *Haijian 2113, 2166, and 2506* entered Japan's territorial waters in the Senkakus.

Jan. 17-19: *Haijian 2112, 2337, and 2151* entered Japan's contiguous zone in the Senkakus.

Jan. 27: *Haijian 2112, 2151, and 2337* entered Japanese territorial waters in the Senkakus.

Jan. 28: *Haijian 2506 and 2166* entered Japan's contiguous zone in the Senkakus.

Jan. 30-31: *Haijian 2166, 2350, and 2506* entered Japan's contiguous zone in the Senkakus.

Feb. 2: *Haijian 2166, 2350, and 2506* entered Japan's territorial waters in the Senkakus, marking the third incursion of 2014 and 77th incursion since nationalization.

Feb. 16: *Haijian 2102, 2113, and 2121* entered Japan's contiguous zone in the Senkakus and entered Japan's territorial waters on Feb. 17.

Feb. 21: *Haijian 2102, 2113, and 2151* entered Japan's contiguous zone in the Senkakus; entered Japan's territorial waters on Feb. 23; continued in Japan's contiguous zone through March 4 joined by *Haijian 2506 and 2305*. When warned by Japanese Coast Guard not to enter Japan's territorial waters, *Haijian 2350* replied in Chinese and Japanese that the Diaoyu Islands belong to China from ancient times.

Feb. 21: JASDF aircraft scrambled against two Chinese aircraft entering Japan's ADIZ.

March 10-12: *Haijian 2350 and 2506* entered Japan's contiguous zone in the Senkakus.

March 15: *Haijian 2506, 2166, and 2350* entered Japan's territorial waters in the Senkakus. Japanese Coast Guard confirmed Chinese Coast Guard boarding of a Chinese fishing ship operating in Japan's EEZ near the Senkakus.

March 23: Chinese Coast Guard propeller aircraft entered Japan's ADIZ in the Senkakus, approaching to within 110 km of Japan's claimed sovereign airspace.

March 22: *Haijian 2101, 2151 and 2401* entered Japan's contiguous zone in the Senkakus.

April 12-24: Chinese research ship was found operating without Japanese approval in Japan's EEZ. The ship did not reply to Japanese Coast Guard warning that it was operating without Japanese consent and asked to cease operation.

April 14: *Haijian 2113, 2337, and 2506* entered Japan's contiguous zone in the Senkakus.

April 24: *Haijian 2101, 2166, and 2401* operated in Japan's contiguous zone in the Senkakus, marking the 34th consecutive day of a Chinese Coast Guard presence.

April 26: *Haijian 2166 and 2401* intrude into Japan's sovereign waters in Senkakus.

April 29: *Haijian 2102, 2166 and 2401* intrude into Japan's sovereign waters in Senkakus, marking the 10th incursion since the beginning of 2014.

Business and economics

China's General Custom Administration released 2013 foreign trade figures on Jan. 10, revealing that trade with Japan declined 5.1 percent to \$312 billion, marking the second consecutive year-on-year decline. The 5.1 percent decline exceeded the 3.9 percent in 2012. China's exports to Japan fell 0.9 percent, while imports from Japan dropped 8.7 percent. Meanwhile, Japanese direct investment in China for the first half of 2013 was down 30 percent to \$4.9 billion over 2012. Final figures for 2013, released by China's Ministry of Commerce, reveal that Japanese investment at \$1.21 billion nose-dived 47.2 percent over 2012. The investment fall-off was most noticeable in Japanese retail, automobile, and machinery-related companies.

In a *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* survey of Japanese, Chinese, and Korean business managers, respondents were asked to rate their ability to separate business from politics in managing daily operations. Sixty percent of Chinese respondents replied they could not work with Japanese counterparts, while 80 percent of Japanese managers replied that they could work together. In a Jan. 7 joint press conference, leaders of Keidanren and the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry called on the Abe government to move quickly to improve relations with China.

Yet, it was not all bad news. Honda and Toyota set sales records in 2013, and visas issued to Chinese tourists by the Shanghai Consulate in January set an all-time high, surpassing the previous one-month high in 2011. During February, foreign tourism to Japan increased by 880,000 a 21 percent increase over February 2013, with the number of Chinese tourists increasing 71 percent for a total of 138,400, the largest-ever February increase. In March, Chinese tourists swelled to a total of 184,200, a staggering 80.1 percent increase over March 2013, setting a record-high for the month of March.

Security

At the end of January, the Joint Staff Office of the Ministry of Defense announced that the JASDF had scrambled 287 times against Chinese aircraft in the period April 1-Dec. 31, an all-time high for the period, including 138 scrambles in the period October to December 2013. At the end of Japan's fiscal year, scrambles against Chinese aircraft totaled 415, an increase of 36 percent over FY 2013.

On March 5 during the Chinese NPC, the government announced plans to increase military spending 12.2 percent over 2013 to approximately \$132 billion. Premier Li Keqiang told the NPC that China would focus its attention on sea power and enhance border, coastal, and air defenses. Japanese analysts noted that China's defense budget is now three times larger than Japan's. Responding to the defense budget increase, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga told reporters that China's lack of transparency is a matter of concern to the international community.

Japan's Ministry of Defense announced its intention to beef up its surveillance infrastructure in the southwest islands, including plans to deploy 100 Ground Self-Defense Force personnel to

Yonaguni Islands by the end of FY 2015, and to create a new early warning squadron at Naha Air Base, including *E-2C AWACS* and *F-15* fighters. On Feb. 3, the *Sankei Shimbun* reported that amphibious troops, amounting to three regiments totaling 2,000-3,000 personnel, would be deployed to Sasebo by the end of FY 2018. On April 19, Defense Minister Onodera broke ground for the construction of a new radar site and Ground Self-Defense Force base on Yonaguni Island and, on April 20, the Ministry of Defense announced the deployment of a squadron of four *E-2C* patrol aircraft from Misawa to Naha, Okinawa.

Public opinion

In mid-February, the *Asahi Shimbun*, *Mainichi Shimbun* and *Fuji-Sankei* polled Japanese public opinion on Japan-China relations. In the *Asahi* poll, 52 percent of respondents said that Prime Minister Abe should hold summit talks with China and Korea “as soon as possible” while 34 percent did not support early talks. As for the prime minister’s visit to Yasukuni, 56 percent of respondents believed that it had negatively affected Japan’s diplomacy; 36 percent said that it had not. The *Mainichi* poll revealed that 54 percent of respondents supported early summit talks with China and Korea, while 38 percent found no reason to hurry. In the *Sankei* poll, 57 percent of respondents agreed that “there’s no rush if Japan must make concessions,” while 30 percent found it “unavoidable for Japan to make concessions to hold a summit at an early date.”

Signs of hope...?

From April 6-14, Hu Deping, the son of former General Secretary Hu Yaobang and confidant of President Xi, visited Japan at the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with approval of the Chinese Communist Party. Later, it was reported that Hu had met Abe on April 8. Commenting on reports of the visit, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga said that the idea for the visit came from the Chinese side; beyond that he refrained from going into detail about the meeting.

Meanwhile, former Prime Minister Fukuda attended the Boao Forum along with Premier Li Keqiang and State Councilors Yang Jing and Yang Jiechi. Both Fukuda and Li addressed the meeting. And, on April 21, at the Western Pacific Naval Symposium in Qingdao, Adm. Kawano Katsutoshi and Adm. Wu Shengli, commanders of the Japanese and Chinese navies, held a 15-minute exchange of views. A formal, sit-down, meeting, hoped for by the Japanese-side, did not materialize.

On April 24-26 at the invitation of his Chinese counterparts, Tokyo Gov. Masuzoe Yoichi visited Beijing, Tokyo’s sister-city. He met counterpart Wang Anshan and toured the Beijing Olympic site. Masuzoe also met former State Councilor and head of the China-Japan Friendship Committee Tang Jiaxuan at the Daiyoutai Guest House. According to Masuzoe, Tang said that not only Beijing but the whole Chinese government welcomed his visit, a strong expression of the government’s intention not only to improve ties between Beijing and Tokyo but also between the two countries. Masuzoe explained that he aimed to improve bilateral ties through city-to-city diplomacy and that Prime Minister Abe likewise welcomed his visit.

Chronology of Japan – China Relations January – April 2014

Jan. 1, 2014: China's Ambassador to the UK Liu Xiaoming writes in the *Daily Telegraph* that militarism is the “haunting Voldemort of Japan” and the Yasukuni Shrine is “kind of horcrux representing the darkest parts of the nation's soul.” Japan's Ambassador Hayashi Keiichi replies, posing China's choices as abiding by the rule of law or being Voldemort in the region.

Jan. 6, 2014: PM Abe holds first press conference of 2014 and acknowledges difficulties in relations with China; calls for dialogue with Beijing.

Jan. 6, 2014: PM Abe visits Ise Shrine.

Jan. 6, 2014: *Jiji Press* reports that maps issued by the Chinese government from 1949 until July 1971 make no reference to the Diaoyu Islands.

Jan. 7, 2014: Through Japanese Embassy in Beijing, China asks for the postponement of young media leader exchange; On, Feb. 24 proposes rescheduling to March.

Jan. 7, 2014: Top executives of Keidanren, Japan Chamber of Commerce, and Japan Association of Corporate Executives call on PM Abe in a joint press conference to quickly improve relations with China and South Korea.

Jan. 7, 2014: New Komeito's Secretary General Inoue Yoshihisa calls on PM Abe to improve relations with China.

Jan. 10, 2014: China's General Customs Administration releases 2013 trade statistics, indicating that trade with Japan declined 5.1 percent over 2012 to \$312 billion.

Jan. 16, 2014: Former Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui says the Senkakus belong to Japan.

Jan. 16, 2014: China announces plans to construct 20 new Coast Guard ships.

Jan. 19, 2014: China opens a shrine in Harbin railroad station to honor Korean resistance leader Ahn Jung-geun who assassinated Ito Hirobumi, Japan's governor general of Korea in 1909.

Jan. 22, 2014: Reports of PM Abe's remarks at Davos suggest that he raised possibility of conflict between China and Japan, drawing parallel with UK and Germany prior to World War I.

Jan. 24, 2014: In a policy address to the Diet, PM Abe calls for the return to a mutually beneficial strategic relationship with China and greater transparency in China's military budget. He announces that Japan will firmly deal with incursion of Chinese ships in the Senkakus and will never yield to attempts to change the status quo by force.

Jan. 28, 2014: Japanese Ministry of Education issues instructions and textbooks to teach that Senkakus are part of Japan's sovereign territory.

Feb. 1, 2014: Japan's National Institute for Defense Studies issues *2014 China Security Report*.

Feb. 3, 2014: Hyakuta Naoki, member of NHK Board of Governors, denies Nanjing Massacre.

Feb. 4, 2014: Former Minister of Defense Morimoto Satoshi calls for close cooperation with the US to counter China's repeated challenges to Japan's sovereignty in the Senkakus.

Feb. 6, 2014: China's ambassador to the UK accuses Japan of raising tensions in Asia and shutting the door to dialogue.

Feb. 11, 2014: Former Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi tells a Seoul audience that his Murayama Statement should not be revised.

Feb. 22, 2014: Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio releases Japan's *2014 Overseas Development Assistance White Paper* emphasizing increased aid to Africa and Southeast Asia.

Feb. 26, 2014: Thirty-seven Chinese plaintiffs file suit in Beijing Court for compensation for wartime forced labor under the Japanese.

Feb. 27, 2014: Former PM Murayama tells Japan's National Press Club that Kono Statement should not be reviewed.

Feb. 28, 2014: Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide appoints a research panel to review the Kono Statement.

Feb. 28, 2014: *Sankei Shimbun* reports China's National People's Congress (NPC) is considering Sept. 3, Victory over Japan, and Dec. 13, Nanjing Massacre, as national holidays.

March 3, 2014: During Lower House meeting, PM Abe acknowledges that Japan had caused suffering and damages to the people of Asia during World War II; reaffirms his government shares views of previous governments with respect to Kono and Murayama Statements.

March 5, 2014: Premier Li Keqiang tells opening session of the NPC that China will oppose any attempts to reverse the course of history.

March 5, 2014: China announces 12.2 percent defense spending increase to \$132 billion.

March 6, 2014: Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Ishiba Shigeru calls for Asia NATO to deal with China's increasing defense budget and US declining influence.

March 8, 2014: Foreign Minister Wang Yi in press conference during NPC that China has no room for compromise on issues related to history or sovereignty.

March 12, 2014: Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga tells reporters that regardless of the findings of the review panel, the government will maintain the Kono Statement.

March 14, 2014: PM Abe tells Upper House Budget Committee that he is not thinking of revising the Kono Statement and that his government will continue to hold to the Murayama Statement will not be revised.

March 18, 2014: Chinese and North Korean representatives unite to criticize PM Abe's handling of the comfort women issue as well as his visit to Yasukuni Shrine.

March 24, 2014: Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga tells reporters the Kono Statement will stand.

March 25, 2014: Foreign Minister Kishida tells Upper House that reported Chinese court decision to hear suit for wartime compensation for forced labor would cast deep shadow on bilateral relations and open door to similar legal proceedings. He says the suit lacks legal standing because all issues related to reparations had been settled at time of normalization.

March 26, 2014: Chinese defense officials attend international PKO symposium in Tokyo.

March 28, 2014: President Xi Jinping raises Nanjing Massacre in Berlin speech.

April 1, 2014: PM Abe government revises Japan's Three Principles on Arms Exports.

April 4, 2014: Japanese Ministry of Education announces new textbooks for 2015 that will include references to territorial issues related to Senkakus and Takeshima.

April 4, 2014: Abe Cabinet approves Japan's *2014 Diplomatic Blue Book*.

April 4, 2014: *Kyodo* reports that Nanjing government is considering registration as cultural sites buildings used as comfort stations.

April 6-14, 2014: Hu Deping son of Hu Yaobang and confidant of President Xi visits Japan and meets PM Abe.

April 13, 2014: Japanese and Chinese business leaders meet in Tokyo; discussions focus on economic cooperation.

April 14, 2014: Foreign Minister Wang tells reporters that China's door to dialogue on issues related to the Diaoyu Islands, the South China Sea is open.

April 15, 2014: China-ROK-Japan International Forum for the Trilateral Cooperation 2014 is held in Seoul.

April 18, 2014: Shanghai Court approves seizure of Mitsui ship *Baosteel Emotion* in commercial dispute dating to 1930s.

April 21-23, 2014: Spring festival at Yasukuni Shrine; Abe does not visit, electing to send plant offering instead.

April 21, 2014: Adm. Kawano Katsutoshi and Adm. Wu Shengli hold 15-minute conversation at Western Pacific Naval Symposium in Qingdao.

April 22, 2014: China-ROK-Japan Northeast Asia Trilateral Forum, sponsored by *Xinhua*, *JoongAng Ilbo*, and *Nikkei*, opens in Jiangsu province, China.

April 22, 2014: One hundred forty-six Diet members, including two Cabinet members, visit Yasukuni Shrine.

April 24, 2014: Mitsui settles *Baosteel Emotion* ship impoundment for about ¥4 billion.

April 24-26, 2014: Tokyo Gov. Masuzoe Yoichi visits Beijing.

April 25, 2014: Gov. Masuzoe meets with Tang Jiaxuan, former state councilor and chairman of the China-Japan Friendship Committee.

April 28, 2014: Gov. Masuzoe briefs PM Abe on Beijing meetings.

April 28-29, 2014: PRC Vice Environment Minister Li Ganjie, and ROK and Japanese Environment Ministers Yoon Seong-kyu and Ishihara Nobuteru hold 16th trilateral Environment Ministers Meeting in Daegu, Korea.