

**THE CLASH OF NATIONALISM BETWEEN
CHINA AND JAPAN IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

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EAI Background Brief No. 829

Date of Publication: 26 June 2013

Executive Summary

1. Since the turn of the new century, there have been persistent conflicts between China and Japan over historical issues ignited by repeated visits to the Yasukuni Shrine by Japanese prime ministers and territorial sovereignty disputes over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands.
2. Particularly, the disputes over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands have escalated since the beginning of Japan's plan to nationalize the islands. Beijing wants Tokyo to recognize that the sovereignty of the islands is a matter of dispute between the two countries, while Japan insists that no dispute exists.
3. The three classes of issues in contention include historical issues such as Nanjing massacre, comfort women, and Yasukuni Shrine; territorial issues over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands and the East China Sea; and issues related to Japan's international relations such as Japan's bid for a United Nations Security Council seat and its alliance with the United States.
4. Chinese nationalism is a product of and a response to the national humiliation China suffered at the hands of imperialist powers in the mid-19th century. It is extremely sensitive to any issues concerning disputed territories.
5. Chinese nationalism in the new century is boosted by China's economic success. The successful hosting of the Summer Olympiad in 2008 has overturned the degrading branding of China as the "Sick Man of Asia". Despite the economic success and national strength, the thoughts and behavior of many Chinese are still shaped by perceived century of long humiliation.
6. Japanese nationalism towards China on the other hand is an anxiety-stricken nationalism that seeks to keep its sense of national superiority. There is within Japanese nationalism a sense of inferiority towards developed countries such as Europe and the United States and a sense of superiority towards its Asian neighbors, China included.

7. Chinese nationalism is less organized than its Japanese counterpart, but it has more destructive potential. It comes and goes as a social movement, with weak influence on government policy.
8. Japanese nationalism towards China (and also Korea) is highly organized and more easily translatable to the policy level. It centers on political elites and has the backing of various civil society organizations.
9. Both Chinese and Japanese nationalism aim at rebuilding their respective national identities. To rebuild its political legitimacy, the Communist Party of China has emphasized its war experience with Japan. Similarly, in rebuilding their national identities, Japanese politicians have to “glorify” and “moralize” their history, including war experience.
10. The conflict between Chinese and Japanese nationalism has had a major impact on Sino-Japanese relationship on all fronts. It also has adversely impacted on the security and prosperity of the whole Asia-Pacific region.