

2013

In My View

Fumio Ota
JMSDF (Ret.)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Ota, Fumio (2013) "In My View," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 66 : No. 4 , Article 16.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol66/iss4/16>

This Additional Writing is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

IN MY VIEW

STATUS QUO, STATUS CHANGE

Sir:

I read the article by Dr. Paul Smith entitled “The Senkaku/Diaoyu Island Controversy: A Crisis Postponed” [*Naval War College Review*, Spring 2013], and I would like to comment with a few points.

First of all, the author wrote that Tokyo’s nationalist Governor Ishihara’s efforts followed by the Japanese government’s purchase of the Senkaku Islands triggered a change of the status quo. Status quo change on this issue, however, was triggered by China in 1992 when it announced a Territorial Law declaring that its territorial water not only included almost all of the South China Sea but also much of the East China Sea. This law was followed by many intrusions into the territorial waters surrounding the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands.

Secondly, the author missed the very important point that China never claimed the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands after 1895 until 1971, right after the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East announced the possibility of oil below the seabed in the area.

Thirdly, and most importantly, the author put Japan and China on the same level and recommended solutions that ignored Chinese expansionistic and hegemonic intentions. According to reports by the U.S. think tanks CSBA and RAND, by 2020 China will be well on its way to having the means to achieve its first-island-chain policy. In May 2013, a Chinese newspaper even discussed the legitimacy of PRC possession of Okinawa. In 2012, one of the PLA think tanks, the Military Science Academy, published “Strong Military Strategy,” which insisted that the PLA Navy must protect Chinese national interests west of 165 East and north of 35 South. According to Chinese internal documents, China insists on a three-line configuration, including a third island chain, which includes the Hawaiian Islands. We should remember that members of a Chinese delegation suggested a potential PRC claim to Hawaiian sovereignty to then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 2012. Admiral Keating, then the commander of U.S.

Pacific Command, was approached in 2007 by a Chinese admiral with a plan to divide the Pacific into U.S. and PRC zones of influence.

The above indications demonstrate Chinese intentions to change the status quo. Japan does not possess such an ambition. Therefore, China is the status changer, while Japan is the status quo power. That point is not clear in Dr. Smith's article. If Japan concedes sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands, China will advance to claim the entire Okinawa Islands, potentially followed by the Hawaiian Islands. There is no international justice or legitimacy in ignoring those Chinese expansionistic and hegemonic intentions.

Last, but not least, the United States had used part of the Senkaku Islands as bombing/gunnery ranges until mid-1980s. It is obvious if the U.S. recognized Chinese sovereignty over the islands, the U.S. would not have used the Senkaku Islands as bombing/gunnery ranges. The U.S. position over sovereignty should not be neutral.

FUMIO OTA

Vice Admiral, JMSDF (Ret.), PhD