

China, South Korea, and the Socotra Rock Dispute

Senan Fox

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A Submerged Rock and Its Destabilizing Potential

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Senan Fox
Kanazawa University
Kanazawa, Japan

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To my parents, Anna and John

*Think where man's glory most begins and ends, and say my glory was I had
such friends.*

William Butler Yeats

PREFACE

Writing a book about an under-explored Sino-South Korean maritime dispute was not an easy task, but the linguistic and research challenges that faced me were ultimately overcome. Initially, the work was a product of research conducted at the University of Tokyo, as part of a post-doctoral research fellowship there. Funded by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), that project followed on from my Ph.D. thesis, which tackled the question of why bilateral approaches to the East China Sea disagreements between Japan and China have a tendency to fluctuate. It also complemented my September 2016 “China Information” (Sage) journal article which contrasted the influence of popular sentiment and domestic politics on the Okinotorishima dispute in the Western Pacific and the Senkaku Shoto/Diaoyu Islands dispute in the East China Sea. As with these earlier works, a central goal of this book was to identify the main causal factors, to draw lessons from the research, to reflect on the possibilities of a resolution, and to pen proposals for the manageability of the dispute. The book’s release is also timely as it comes in a period of unpredictable and often sudden fluctuations in relations between the two Koreas as well as their ties with China and the USA.

Socotra Rock is an underwater rock that is located between mainland China and the Korean Peninsula in waters that straddle the Yellow Sea and the East China Sea. For reasons explained inside, the dispute is not a territorial question but rather one related to jurisdictional rights in the sea area in which the feature rests. This work was motivated by a desire to present to East Asia watchers an insight into an under-examined maritime dispute involving two major players in the region, China and South Korea.

An added inspiration was to contribute to the increasingly important study of sea-related disagreements and their relevance to national security, domestic politics, and international law, as well as to the buzzwords in maritime inter-state relations: resource competition and freedom of navigation. Much has been written to date on the South China Sea disputes as well as the East China Sea disputes with more needing to be said about this issue at the gateway to the Yellow Sea, in close proximity to the People's Republic of China (PRC)'s core urban, industrial, and military centers. This is not to mention its strategic importance to South Korea.

Although the rock has been a bilateral issue for over half a century, the aggravation of the Socotra Rock dispute is also a relatively recent yet no less important phenomenon with consequences for maritime disagreements in East Asia and elsewhere. Frictions regarding the feature have also been accompanied by wider regional developments related to China's rise and its greater capability and willingness to physically display its control and "rights" in disputed areas. They have also coincided with the construction of the nearby and massive Jeju Island naval base, which began in 2007 and was officially opened in 2016. To date, this is the only publication in monograph form that deals directly and chronologically with the dispute. Other shorter works often only focus on technical components, but this work also addresses the political, economic, historical, and present-day strategic implications.

My hope for this book is that readers will be more informed about this understated yet important issue of influence in terms of the challenges faced by the littoral states of East Asia. For China watchers, hopefully it will provide another important insight into that state's activities and strategy in waters it claims as its own. This work also presents evidence of more erratic behavior by the PRC in recent years, pointing readers perhaps to a portend of things to come: hence the decision to address the Socotra Rock issue. By reading the seven chapters contained herein, the reader should receive a solid grounding in regard to both relations over the rock prior to escalation in the early 2000s and developments after the early 2000s until the present day. The reader's knowledge of the role played by key factors such as security strategy, international law, and economic resources should likewise be enhanced. The destabilizing influence of bilateral challenges related to domestic politics, historical controversies, economic ties, popular nationalist sentiment, bureaucratic miscommunications, and a Chinese Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in November 2013 is also covered. It is my sincere wish that the reader will learn about the commonalities

between the issues and will possess a greater appreciation of their utility for present and future policy prescription and analysis. In addition, I hope that insights into the dispute's impact upon bilateral and regional relations and why a resolution has proved elusive to date will be broadened.

As I introduce this book, allow me also to acknowledge those without whom the work may not have seen the light of day. These include my parents, John and Anna, whose unceasing love and support provided me with much needed emotional sustenance. Special thanks goes out also to the book's editor, Dr. Mary Jane Fox (no relation). She will never truly know how much her skill, patience, and refusal to give up in spite of looming deadlines was the determining factor in finalizing the book. I would also like to thank the JSPS, who provided me with all the necessary funding to come to Japan and to complete the research as a post-doctoral fellow. In particular, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Akio Takahara (Faculty of Law) at the University of Tokyo, who kindly agreed to act as my research host and who, throughout my time there, acted with the utmost professionalism and kindness with regard to my various requests and enquiries. Thanks also to the administrators and staff at the said Faculty of Law for all their assistance. Last but not least, I would like to thank my colleagues and the administrative staff at the School of International Studies at Kanazawa University for their advice and help as I endeavored to complete the book.

Kanazawa, Japan

Senan Fox

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABMD	Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense
ADIZ	Air Defense Identification Zone
AIS	Automatic Identification System
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCTV	China Central Television
CFR	Council on Foreign Relations
CLCS	Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
DRP	Defense Reform Plan
EEZs	Exclusive Economic Zones
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FIR	Flight Information Region
FONOP	Freedom of Navigation Operation
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IORS	Ieodo Ocean Research Station
IUU	Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (fishing)
JADIZ	Japan Air Defense Identification Zone
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff (ROK)
JDZ	Joint Development Zone
JFC	Joint Fisheries Committee
JMSDF	Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force
KADIZ	Korea Air Defense Identification Zone
KBS	Korean Broadcasting System
KCG	Korean Coast Guard

KCMGN	Korea Committee on Marine Geographical Names
KHOA	Korea Hydrographic and Oceanographic Administration
KIOST	Korean Institute of Ocean Science and Technology
KIPA	Korea Institute of Public Administration
KORDI	Korean Ocean Research and Development Institute
MOFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (South Korea)
NEP	Northeast Project
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NLL	Northern Limit Line
PCA	Permanent Court of Arbitration
PLAAF	People's Liberation Army Air Force
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
PMZ	Provisional Measures Zone
PRC	People's Republic of China
PWZ	Provisional Measures Zone
RNP	Revive Northeast Project
ROK	Republic of Korea
ROKAF	Republic Of Korea Air Force
ROKN	Republic Of Korea Navy
SAR	Search And Research (Exercises)
SIR	Society for Ieodo Research
SLOCs	Sea Lines of Communication
SOA	State Oceanic Administration
THAAD	Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense
TZ	Transitional Zone
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

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