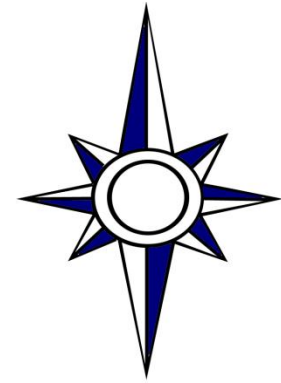


Comparative Connections

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Japan-China Relations: Another New Start

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Noda Yoshiko succeeded Kan Naoto as prime minister of Japan in early September and met President Hu Jintao at the G20 Summit in Cannes and the APEC meeting in Honolulu. On both occasions, they agreed to take steps to strengthen the mutually beneficial strategic relationship. They reiterated that commitment during Noda's visit to China at the end of December. Meanwhile, maritime safety and security issues in the East China Sea and the South China Sea continued as a source of friction. In both areas, Tokyo worked to create a maritime crisis management mechanism while Chinese ships continued to intrude into the Japan's EEZ extending from the Senkaku Islands, keeping alive contentious sovereignty issues. Tokyo and Beijing were able to resolve a November incident involving a Chinese fishing boat operating in Japanese waters. Repeated high-level efforts by Tokyo to resume negotiations on joint development in the East China Sea failed to yield any progress.

Prime Minister Noda: another new beginning

On Aug. 29, Noda Yoshihiko was elected president of the Democratic Party of Japan and on Sept. 2 succeeded Kan Naoto as prime minister. China's media welcomed him with articles focusing on his earlier comments on history – that Japan's wartime leaders, convicted of war crimes and enshrined in the Yasukuni Shrine, should no longer be considered war criminals – and his concerns with China's military buildup, as well as its mixing of “economic growth and nationalism.” The *Global Times* characterized Noda as a “Hawk.”

Early in his tenure, Noda telephoned Premier Wen Jiabao; they agreed to deepen the mutually beneficial strategic relationship and, looking to the 40th anniversary of normalization of relations in 2012, to improve sentiments among people in both countries. Wen invited Noda to visit China at his earliest convenience while Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Jiang Yu told the media that China had sent congratulations to Japan's new leadership and had noted and appreciated “Prime Minister Noda's commitment to developing the China-Japan strategic relationship of mutual benefit.” China stood ready “to work along with Japan to actively enhance dialogue, exchanges and cooperation in wide-ranging areas and multi-levels....”

Japan's new Foreign Minister Gamba Koichiro telephoned his Chinese counterpart Yang Jiechi on Sept 9. Touching on the 2010 Senkaku incident, Gamba raised the issue of a crisis

* 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.

management mechanism to deal with such incidents; he also pressed for an early resumption of talks to implement the agreement on the joint development of resources in the East China Sea. Yang replied that he wanted to work to narrow the differences and promote understanding between China and Japan.

In a Sept. 14 policy address to the Diet, Noda expressed concern with China's "reinforcement of national power, which lacks transparency and their acceleration of maritime activities." He challenged China to act "as a responsible member of the international community." At the same time he made clear that he wanted to deepen relations with China as the two countries moved toward the 40th anniversary of normalization of relations in 2012.

In an Oct. 30 interview with *Financial Times*, the prime minister observed that China's lack of transparency and growing defense budget was as a source of uncertainty in both the East China and the South China Sea and called on China to act in accordance with international law in its maritime activities. In Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei, responding to a question regarding Noda's remarks, said that "China is committed to the path of peaceful development and pursues a good neighborly policy of friendship and partnership with surrounding countries. He went on to say, that China pursues a defense policy which is "defensive in nature and its strategic intention and military strength are always transparent."

High-level diplomacy: Noda-Hu meetings

At the G20 Summit in Cannes, Prime Minister Noda met briefly with President Hu Jintao. The two leaders, looking toward the 40th anniversary of normalization of relations in 2012, reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen the mutually beneficial strategic relationship and to improve national sentiments toward each other's country. They also agreed to meet at the upcoming APEC forum in Honolulu and to advance preparations for a Noda visit to China in December.

On Nov. 12, Noda met Hu during the APEC forum where he was quoted as telling Hu that in order to make the East China Sea a sea of "peace, cooperation and friendship, it is very important to resume the talks at an early date regarding negotiations on an agreement of natural resources in the East China Sea." Hu is reported to have replied that China wants to "continue communications and prepare for an early resumption of negotiations" and that China remained committed to implementing the 2008 agreement. He was also reported to have told Noda that China will consider "easing restrictions" on Japanese food imports imposed following the Fukushima nuclear crisis. Noda told Hu that Sino-Japanese relations are "very important" for the region and the world and that China's development has created a "major chance" for Japan. They agreed to deepen the mutually beneficial strategic partnership and to make preparations for Noda to visit China in December.

In mid-November, Japanese media reported that preparations were underway for Noda's visit to China on Dec. 12-13. The visit would be the first by a Japanese prime minister since the October 2009 visit by Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio. The early agenda included the discussion of the steps to be taken to promote the mutually beneficial strategic relationship, to commemorate the 40th anniversary of normalization in 2012, and to resume negotiations on the joint development of resources in the East China Sea. To advance the prime minister's trip, Foreign Minister

Gemba Koichiro visited Beijing and met Premier Wen. Gemba called for the creation of a “crisis management mechanism” to avoid potential incidents in the East China Sea, for an early resumption of negotiations on the East China Sea, and further easing on Japanese food imports.

The Dec. 7 *Asahi Shimbun*, citing Japanese Foreign Ministry sources, reported that Beijing had requested postponement of the visit for internal reasons. Possible reasons for the request, according to the *Asahi* report, were that Dec. 13 is the anniversary of the Nanjing massacre and a meeting of key Chinese economic planning officials would be taking place in Beijing at that time. Both sides, however, continued to work toward a visit before the end of the year, finally reaching agreement on moving the visit to Dec. 25-26.

Prime Minister Noda met Prime Minister Wen in the Great Hall of the People on the day he arrived. With the recent death of Kim Jong Il, their meeting focused on the Korean Peninsula with Noda telling Wen that peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula is “a common interest for both Japan and China” and asking China to play a positive role in resuming the Six-Party Talks. Noda also called on Wen to help resolve Japan’s abductee issue with North Korea. Looking toward the 40th anniversary of the normalization of relations, they agreed to work to strengthen the mutually beneficial strategic relationship. Specifically, they agreed to work to establish a maritime crisis management mechanism. Meanwhile, Wen agreed to work toward easing restrictions on Japanese food imports and, to raise spirits in the area affected by the Fukushima disaster, to lease a panda to the Sendai zoo. They failed to make progress on an early resumption of negotiations on joint development in the East China Sea.

After the meeting, Japan released a document titled “Six Initiatives to Further Deepen the Japan-China Mutually Beneficial Strategic Relationship.” However, the *Asahi Shimbun* reported that the document had a note saying “Japan is solely responsible for the drafting of this statement” and commented that the unilateral statement only “served to underscore the differences between the two countries.”

Noda also met President Hu. Discussion again focused on the Korean Peninsula and on efforts to strengthen the mutually beneficial strategic relationship. According to Japanese officials, Noda told Hu that China, as the chair of the Six-Party Talks, has a “very important” role to play and asked Hu to take steps toward a resumption of negotiations to return to the talks. Again, according to Japanese officials, Hu indicated a willingness to do so. Noda also told Hu that “strengthening relations between the two countries is indispensable for solving regional and global issues.” On the East China Sea, they agreed to work toward making the area “a sea of peace, cooperation and friendship” and creating a mechanism to discuss maritime security issues. Again, they failed to make progress on an early resumption of negotiations on joint development in the East China Sea. On Japan’s abductees, Hu expressed the hope that the issue would be solved in the context of improving Japan’s relations with North Korea. The two governments also announced agreement to facilitate purchase of government bonds using yen and yuan directly rather than converting first into dollars during the summit.

Prime Minister Noda and Yasukuni

On Sept. 2, Prime Minister Noda, reversing his previously held position on the Yasukuni Shrine, told the media that neither he nor members of his Cabinet would make official visits to the

shrine. Acknowledging that “there are various opinions, Noda said that he “thought it necessary not to make official visits when taking international diplomacy into account.”

When questioned in the Lower House whether he understood calls for the dis-enshrinement of Class-A War Criminals from the shrine to be “interference in Japan’s domestic affairs,” Noda answered that “generally speaking,” he would take the firm attitude that such actions represented an “inappropriate interference in domestic affairs.” Pressed further with respect to China and ROK calls for dis-enshrinement, Noda replied that because Japan’s constitution guarantees freedom of religion and because the shrine is administered by a private corporation, the government takes no position as to those who can be venerated at the shrine.

Security

In a speech delivered in Washington on Sept. 7, Maehara Seiji, chairman of the Democratic Party of Japan’s Policy Research Committee, advocated a relaxation of restrictions on the use of weapons by the Self-Defense Forces during peacekeeping operations, noting that Japan’s participation in peacekeeping operations “is still not enough compared to that of other major states.” He also called for a review of Japan’s arms export policy to allow Japan’s defense industry to participate in international development projects.

Two days later, Minister of Defense Ichikawa Yasuo told reporters that Maehara’s ideas had not been sufficiently considered within the party. While recognizing that Maehara as an individual political figure was free to voice his opinions, Ichikawa said it was important to continue debate within the party. Meanwhile Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura Osamu told the *Sankei Shimbun* that the Noda government had no reason to change the government’s interpretation of the constitutional strictures on the right of collective self-defense.

On Sept. 30, the Ministry of Defense submitted its 2012 budget request, calling for a 0.6 percent increase in spending. The proposed increase focused on enhancing surveillance and radar capabilities in the southwestern islands as well strengthening defense against cyber-attacks. In Mid-October, Prime Minister Noda, speaking at the Hyakuri Air Base, said that Japan’s security environment “has grown increasingly murky due to China’s stepped-up activities in local waters and its rapid military expansion, along with North Korea’s repeated militaristic provocations.”

Two weeks later, Noda told the Lower House that he had no intention of changing the long-standing interpretation that the exercise of the right of collective self-defense is prohibited by the constitution. As for the three principles on arms exports, Noda said that as a peace-loving nation, Japan avoids “fomenting international conflicts” but that the government has been “mapping out necessary measures to respond to the ongoing international environment surrounding defense equipment from a broad perspective.” On Dec. 24, Defense Minister Ichikawa told reporters that the government intended to relax the ban on arms exports and three days later, Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura confirmed the government’s decision.

Senkaku Islands: policy reiteration

At the end of August, Foreign Minister Matsumoto Takeaki called in China’s Ambassador Cheng Yonghua to protest the entry of two Chinese Maritime Enforcement Agency ships into

waters close to Japan's Senkaku Islands. The protest was based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) provision that activities of the Chinese ships in challenging Japanese sovereignty could not be considered innocent passage. A day earlier Japan's Ambassador Niwa Uichiro had lodged a similar protest with China's Foreign Ministry.

On Sept. 7, the anniversary of the 2010 Senkaku incident, Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura reasserted Japan's claim to sovereignty over the Senkakus, telling reporters that that "historically and based on international law there can be absolutely no doubt that the islands are part of Japan's national territory." Referring to the August incursion, Fujimura made it clear that "it is the fundamental responsibility of the government to protect Japan's national territory including its sea environs." In Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Jiang Yu reiterated China's "principled position" on the issue, namely that "the Diaoyu island and its affiliated islands have been China's inherent territory since ancient times. China has indisputable sovereignty over them." Jiang expressed China's hope that "the Japan side treats this issue rationally."

Newly appointed Japanese Foreign Minister Gemba met Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi at the United Nations on Sept. 22. The two ministers reaffirmed their country's commitment to deepening the mutually beneficial strategic relationship, but both also asserted claims of sovereignty over the Senkakus. When Gemba called for the early resumption of negotiations on the joint development of resources in the East China Sea, Yang replied that he wanted to promote understanding and narrow the differences between the two sides. Both confirmed the importance of establishing a mechanism to avoid incidents in the East China Sea, including the area of the Senkakus. Afterward, Gemba told reporters that he did not refer to the August incident – the incident had been addressed by former Foreign Minister Matsumoto – and that, because a territorial issue did not exist, there was no reason for him to bring it up.

In a Sept. 22 Tokyo address, Ambassador Cheng spoke to China's activities in the Diaoyu Islands, asserting that because the islands were part of China's territory the activities were appropriate. China, he said, wanted to resolve problems peacefully through dialogue. As for concerns with China's military spending, the ambassador remarked that Japan's Self-Defense Forces were not completely transparent with respect to China. While acknowledging that China's defense spending had increased as China's economy had developed, he pointed out that as an element of China's domestic GDP, military spending amounted to only 1.4 percent.

Senkaku Islands: challenges

On Sept. 25, Japanese Coast Guard aircraft spotted a Chinese maritime research ship inside Japan's exclusive economic zone near the Senkakus in an area outside the zone in which China had notified Japan of its planned research activities. The Coast Guard warned the Chinese ship against conducting activities outside the agreed upon area. Through diplomatic channels, the Regional Coast Guard Headquarters in Naha emphasized that Japan could not allow marine research to be conducted in the area without its consent. China's Foreign Ministry replied that the activities represented an appropriate exercise of China's rights because the area of the Diaoyu Islands was undisputable Chinese territory.

Less than two weeks later, Japanese Coast Guard aircraft identified another Chinese maritime research ship operating near the Senkakus in an area in which it had failed to give previous notification of research activities. The Chinese ship did not respond to the Coast Guard's challenge, but, after two hours cleared the area and returned to the area of prior notification.

On Oct. 24, a Japanese Coast Guard patrol boat spotted two Chinese Fisheries Patrol ships operating in Japan's contiguous zone in the Senkaku Islands. In response to a Coast Guard radio inquiry, the Chinese ships replied that they were conducting a general patrol. The Chinese ships weaved in and out of the contiguous zone but refrained from entering Japan's territorial waters. Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura told reporters that Japan will continue warning against entry into Japan's sovereign waters. On Oct. 27, Fujimura told the Upper House Cabinet Committee that the government, to strengthen Japan's EEZ claims, would attach names to 10 of Japan's heretofore 49 unnamed islands.

On Dec. 6, Japanese Coast Guard aircraft again identified a Chinese maritime research ship operating within Japan's EEZ in an area outside the area of prior notification of research activities. Following a second Coast Guard warning, the Chinese ship moved into the area of prior notification. The incident marked the seventh time this year that Chinese research ships were found outside the area of prior notification in waters around Okinawa.

In early November Foreign Minister Gemba found himself in a Senkaku controversy. On Nov. 10, the weekly magazine *Shinchoo* ran an article quoting Gemba as saying that if China were to advance a proposal for the Senkakus, taking up the proposal would be acceptable. Meeting with reporters on Nov. 9, a day before publication of the article, Gemba made clear that the Senkakus were Japanese territory and under no circumstances would he say such a thing. The article, he charged, was 100 percent unacceptable and without factual foundation. On Nov. 29, *Kyodo News Service* reported that China had proposed resuming negotiations with Japan on the boundary in the East China Sea.

An East China Sea non-incident

On Nov. 6, a Japanese Coast Guard ship attempted to inspect a Chinese fishing boat operating in the East China Sea off the Goto Islands in Japanese waters. The Chinese captain refused inspection, and a four hour-plus chase ensued, ending with the Coast Guard ship colliding with the fishing boat to bring it to a stop. The Coast Guard placed the Chinese captain Zhang Tianxiong under arrest. The following day, Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura told reporters that Japan would deal "appropriately" with the matter in accordance with domestic law.

Beijing took the position that the incident was a "regular fisheries case" and hoped that Japan would respect the rights and interests of the fishermen and resolve the matter as soon as possible. On Nov. 9, Captain Zhang was released after paying a 300,000 yen fine for violating Japan's Fishery Law. Zhang was not charged with illegal fishing because no evidence was found that the ship had engaged in poaching. Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura told reporters that local authorities had "appropriately" resolved the case in accordance with Japanese law and evidence. Fujimura did not think the incident would have any effect on Japan-China relations. China's Foreign Ministry concurred in the view that the incident was disposed of "appropriately."

Other seas: South China Sea

Faced with issues in the East China Sea, Japan openly showed an interest in issues related to territorial claims and freedom of navigation in the South China Sea. On Sept. 9, Japanese and Philippine government officials met in Tokyo to discuss what the Japanese Foreign Ministry said were issues related to cooperation on maritime affairs as well as global and regional issues. On Sept. 20, Japan's Ambassador to the Philippines Urabe Toshinao told reporters that Japan has an interest in keeping the world's oceans safe and open to commerce and that Japan and the Philippines will "exchange notes" to assess how territorial issues in the region could be peacefully resolved. He acknowledged that "these kinds of disputes are dealt with basically between the parties concerned," but went on to say that "since there is this legitimate interest about the safety of the sea, we also have an interest in how these things are developing." At the same time he emphasized that Japan and the Philippines "are not having an alliance against China." What the two countries are looking to do is "to create a win-win relationship among us." China is a "very important partner for both of us."

On Sept. 27, Prime Minister Noda met Philippine President Benigno Aquino and agreed that both countries shared a strategic interest in the safety of the high seas and would cooperate to advance the development of a new forum to deal with maritime-related issues. Further, the two governments agreed to periodic consultations between Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force and the Philippine Navy and Air Force on sea-lane safety issues. In a joint communiqué, the two leaders "confirmed that the South China Sea is vital as it connects the world and the Asia-Pacific region, and that peace and stability therein is a common interest to the international community." The joint statement also committed the two countries to a "Strategic Partnership."

In Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei told reporters that "China has indisputable sovereignty over the Nansha Islands and their adjacent seas." He went on to say "there has never been a problem with freedom and safety of navigation in the South China Sea and countries in and outside the region have benefited from it." Regarding the reference to the South China Sea in the Japan-Philippine communiqué, Vice Foreign Minister Cui Tiankai suggested that "Japan should think comparatively about what will truly serve Japan's national interests."

The *Yomiuri Shinbun* reported that Japan had decided to propose the creation of a new body, tentatively "The East Asian Oceanic Forum," during the East Asia Summit (EAS) in Indonesia and, on Oct. 27, *Kyodo News Service* reported that Tokyo intended to propose that Japan and ASEAN's other dialogue partners be admitted to the ASEAN Maritime Forum. The *Asahi Shinbun* on Nov. 6 quoted the prime minister's special advisor for foreign affairs, Nagashima Akihisa, as saying that "Japan is determined to take the lead in establishing maritime order in East Asia." Nagashima referenced Japan's efforts to establish a rule-making forum at the EAS.

Outlook

With both Beijing and Tokyo committed to celebrating the 40th anniversary of normalization of diplomatic relations in 2012, both governments will make every effort to manage sensitive

territorial and sovereignty issues. Whether they will be able constructively to address long-standing issues such as joint development in the East China Sea is another question.

Chronology of Japan – China Relations September -December 2011

Aug. 25, 2011: Foreign Minister Matsumoto Takeaki calls in Chinese Ambassador Cheng Yonghua to protest activities of Chinese Maritime Enforcement Agency.

Aug. 29, 2011: Noda Yoshihiko is elected president of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ).

Sept. 2, 2011: Noda succeeds Kan Naoto as prime minister.

Sept. 2, 2011: Prime Minister (PM) Noda revises his position on Yasukuni Shrine and pledges that he will not visit the shrine.

Sept. 7, 2011: On the anniversary of 2010 Senkaku Incident, Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura Osamu reasserts Japan's claim to sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands.

Sept. 9, 2011: Japanese and Philippine officials meet in Tokyo discuss South China Sea and maritime safety issues.

Sept. 9, 2011: Ambassador Niwa Uichiro visits Jilin province and inspects construction of the plant dedicated to destruction of remaining chemical weapons abandoned by the Imperial Army.

Sept. 14, 2011: PM Noda, in policy address to the Diet, expresses concern with China's growing power, lack of transparency, and stepped up maritime activities.

Sept. 14, 2011: PM Noda tells the Lower House that calls from China and the ROK for the dis-enfranchisement of Class-A War Criminals is interference in Japan's domestic affairs.

Sept. 14, 2011: Exhibition dedicated to Comfort Women opens at Anti-Japanese War Memorial near the Marco Polo Bridge; exhibition is co-sponsored by Japanese civic organizations.

Sept. 17-18, 2011: Cyber-attacks, attributed to China, hit Japanese government websites.

Sept. 20, 2011: Chinese Foreign Ministry denies China is the source of cyber-attack on Mitsubishi Heavy Industries.

Sept. 22, 2011: Foreign Ministers Gamba and Yang meet at the United Nations in New York.

Sept. 25, 2011: Japanese Coast Guard aircraft spot a Chinese maritime research ship operating inside Japan's EEZ near the Senkaku Islands.

Sept. 27, 2011: Prime Minister Noda meets Philippine President Benigno Aquino in Tokyo.

Oct. 3, 2011: PM Noda and President Hu Jintao meet at the G20 Summit in Cannes.

Oct. 7, 2011: Japanese Coast Guard aircraft identify a Chinese maritime research ship operating without prior notification in area near the Senkaku islands.

Oct. 13, 2011: DPJ defense council urges the Japanese government to reconsider the Three Principles on Arms Exports.

Oct. 14, 2011: Japan's Ministry of Defense sources report that in April-September period Air Self-Defense Forces scrambled 83 times to deal with Chinese aircraft approaching Japanese airspace – a three times increase over the same period in 2010.

Oct. 14, 2011: Minister of Trade and Industry Edano Yukio visits China, meets Premier Wen and Commerce Minister Chen Deming in an effort to advance economic cooperation.

Oct. 16, 2011: Speaking at Hyakuri Air Base, PM Noda expresses concerns with China's stepped-up activities in waters off Japan.

Oct. 24, 2011: Japanese Coast Guard patrol boat spots two Chinese fisheries patrol boats operating in Japan's contiguous zone in the Senkaku Islands.

Oct. 27, 2011: Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura Osamu tells the Upper House that the government plans to name 10 of Japan's 49 unnamed islands to strengthen Japan's EEZ claims.

Oct. 26, 2011: Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura reveals cyber-attack on Foreign Ministry and a number of diplomatic posts overseas; *Yomiuri Shimbun* reports that the viruses transferred data to servers in China.

Oct. 30, 2011: In a *Financial Times* interview, PM Noda expresses concerns with China's maritime activities in East China Sea and South China Sea; he calls on China to respect international laws governing maritime activities.

Nov. 1, 2011: PM Noda tells Lower House that he does not intend to change the longstanding interpretation on the exercise of the right of collective self-defense.

Nov. 4, 2011: *Sankei Shimbun* reports postponement of High-Level Economic Dialogue meeting.

Nov. 6, 2011: *Sankei Shimbun* reports appointment of former Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan as Chinese head of China-Japan Friendship Society.

Nov. 6, 2011: Following a chase and collision, Japanese Coast Guard arrests captain of Chinese fishing boat operating in Japanese waters.

Nov. 7, 2011: Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura tells the media that Japan will deal appropriately with the fishing boat incident in accordance with domestic law.

Nov. 8, 2011: Japanese lawmakers, including Nagashima Akihisa, special foreign affairs advisor to the prime minister, meet the visiting Dalai Lama; the meeting draws a protest from China.

Nov. 9, 2011: The Chinese fishing boat captain is released after paying 300,000 yen fine. Chinese Foreign Ministry accepts resolution of the issue as appropriate.

Nov. 10, 2011: Japan Tourism Agency announces that Chinese tourists account for 17 percent of visitors to Japan in 2010, the largest percentage of foreign visitors.

Nov. 12, 2011: Health Minister Komiyayama Yoko visits Beijing and asks for relaxation of Chinese restrictions on Japanese food imports.

Nov. 12, 2011: PM Noda and President Hu meet during APEC Leader's Meeting in Honolulu; they agree to deepen mutually beneficial strategic relationship.

Nov. 22-23, 2011: Japanese Ministry of Defense reports six Chinese Navy ships transit Okinawa prefecture in international waters to conduct exercises in the Pacific Ocean.

Nov. 23, 2011: Foreign Minister Gemba visits Beijing to advance PM Noda's December visit; he meets Premier Wen.

Dec. 6, 2011: Beijing requests postponement of PM Noda's visit scheduled for Dec. 12-13.

Dec. 9, 2011: *Kyodo News Service* reports 1,000 Chinese workers strike over severance pay at Hitachi hard-disc factory in Shenzhen.

Dec. 18, 2011: Japan National Tourism Organization announces that November Chinese visitors increased 35 percent over November 2010, the first increase since March of this year.

Dec. 20, 2011: Foreign Ministers Gemba and Yang confer by telephone on Korean affairs following the Dec. 19 announcement of the death of Kim Jong Il.

Dec. 24, 2011: Minister of Defense Ichikawa Yasuo announces the government's intention to revise the Three Principles on Arms Exports.

Dec. 25-26, 2011: PM Noda visits China and meets Premier Wen, President Hu, and State Councilor Dai.

Dec. 27, 2011: Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura announces revision of the Three Principles on Arms Exports.