Rocks in the Water

The Liancourt Rocks Dispute

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Abstract

The Liancourt Rocks, known also by the name ‘Dokdo’ in Korean, and ‘Takeshima’ in Japanese, are two tiny islets situated between Japan and the Korean Peninsula in the Sea of Japan. The islets have been the source of bilateral tension and conflict due to the fact that both Japan and the Republic of Korea claim sovereign title.

In a time of imperialist progress and expansionism, Japan incorporated Liancourt Rocks in its territory in 1905, well before the conclusion of the Shimonoseki and Eulsa treaties which ultimately left Korea deprived of the right to conduct foreign relations as a Protectorate of the Japanese Empire. This move is regarded as incorporation of ‘terra nullius’ in Japan, while it is regarded as a blatant and illegal annexation of Korean territory among Koreans. Both sides, therefore, hark back to 18th and 19th century documents to build their case.

An important basis of the argumentation is the body of maps being produced in the pre-modern period. The inaccurate, confusing and sometimes obviously erroneous mapmaking tradition makes this argumentation problematic. The maps lay a weak foundation as evidence for both sides in that seemingly all claims based on these can easily be countered by pointing to the interchanging of appellations to the islands and islets of the Sea of Japan. It is also important to be aware of the differences of the function the traditional map compared to a modern map. The modern map establishes a national territorial identity, while the traditional map lack this dimension. Nevertheless, we see a tendency to read old maps as if they convey claims of national territory and sovereignty.

In a time of confusion and ambiguous signals from the victorious Allied Powers regarding the territorial composition of Japan after the collapse of the Empire in 1945, the young state Republic of Korea, liberated from its colonial shackles, established a permanent presence of personnel on the Liancourt Rocks. This occupation has since been regularly protested by Japan, and bilateral agreements on the delineation of exclusive economic and fishery zones have been made without resolving the issue of sovereignty. The dispute, therefore, continue to be an element – and cause – of bilateral tension between ROK and Japan.
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1. Introduction

Territorial disputes in East Asia come loaded with problems yet to be resolved stemming from 20th century conflicts. In particular, Japan’s history as a coloniser of the Asian continent, before and during the two World Wars, has been the source of anti-Japanese sentiment prominent among the Korean and Chinese peoples and their political leaders in the years after the fall of the Japanese Empire.

The conflicts may, from a distance, be regarded as traditional conflicts of economic and territorial interest, but the symbolic significance of a history of Japanese overseas expansion should not be underestimated while analysing current conflicts.

There are, currently, three major unresolved territorial disputes in which Japan is involved. These disputes include the Northern Territories / Southern Kuriles, where Russia is the current occupier of the disputed territory, the Senkaku / Diaoyutai Islands, where both the People’s Republic of China, PRC, and the Republic of China, ROC (Taiwan), protest the Japanese occupation of the disputed territory and have raised contesting claims to sovereign title, and the Liancourt Rocks (known in Japanese as ‘Takeshima’, and in Korean as ‘Dokdo’), a pair of islets in the Sea of Japan. Liancourt Rocks have been under de facto control of the Republic of Korea, ROK since the early 1950s, though this control has been repeatedly contested by Japan to this date.

In my thesis, I will focus on the most long-lasting of these disputes, and the one seemingly most entrenched in disagreements on history, in my opinion, namely the conflict of sovereign title to Liancourt Rocks. The territorial claims of both sides seem to reflect major unresolved questions of East Asian nationalism, post-colonialism and history in general. I will attempt to analyse the background to, and history of, the conflict, and explore to which degree we can find nationalistic sentiments being aroused in both countries, and to which degree there is a difference in the nature and application of nationalism in Japan and the Republic of Korea with regards to this specific dispute, and how they relate to other disagreements.

A central theme in these discussions will be the construction of a territorial national identity of the two countries in question, ROK and Japan. I will use the term ‘geo-body’, a term first coined by the historian Thongchai Winichakul and used in his exploration of the significance of mapmaking in the definition of a Siam territorial identity, and its
relation to the construction of the Siam nation, at the turn of the 19th century as presented in his book “Siam Mapped: a history of the geo-body of a nation” (Winichakul, 1994).

An understanding of Winichakul’s term geo-body and its significance in the territorial dispute over Liancourt Rocks will, of course, require an exploration of the relation between nationalism and geography, which I will partly base on geographer James Anderson’s text “Nationalism and Geography” found in his book “The Rise of the Modern State” (Anderson, 1986). I will also, by surveying the development and theoretical background of territorial identities in the examples of late 19th and early 20th century Germany and Poland. In this way I hope to give a description of the importance of territory for the modern nation-state. Furthermore, I will attempt to give an account of how these ideas were adopted and applied in East Asian nation-building.

I set out to give an overview of how the inarguably modern and specifically Western concepts of a state’s territorial identity and integrity differ from the traditional concept of state and rule in Sino-centric Asia, which I will contend was the model for the pre-modern East Asian state. The contrasting traits of the modern nation-state concept and the traditional state in East Asia will be explained and set in relation to current territorial disputes.

The dispute over Liancourt Rocks is, although it has a long history, neither the most internationally known territorial conflict in East Asia, nor the most intrinsically problematic one from a Japanese point of view. The Japanese dispute with Russia over the islands known in Japanese as the ‘Northern Territories’ seem to bear more significance to the Japanese Government and commands greater attention among the public. I will give a short analysis of this dispute since I find it to shed some light over the Liancourt Rocks conflict. For the Republic of Korea, however, the Liancourt Rocks dispute is by far the most important bilateral territorial dispute. There are other, less publicised, claims to territory but these are not put forward by, and lack official support of, ROK Government, being mainly advocated by minor groups of scholars and Research Institutes, and thus commanding less attention.

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1 The ‘Northern Territories’ is a Japanese term, ‘Hoppō Ryōdo’. The islands are also known in Japanese as ‘Minami Chishima’, and as ‘Kuril'skie ostrova’ in Russian. The English appellation more commonly used is ‘Kuril Islands’.
The dispute over Liancourt Rocks is one of several bilateral disagreements between ROK / Korea and Japan stemming from recent history. Korea suffered severely from Japanese imperialist expansionism in the first half of the century through war, annexation and colonization. The Post-war Era has been signified with cautious detente, but also, from a ROK point of view, repeated failure from Japanese side to sufficiently acknowledge the wartime atrocities and the suffering of the Korean people. Iconic symbols of these sentiments are the story of the ‘Comfort Women’, the controversy concerning a serving Japanese Prime Minister’s visits to the ‘Yasukuni Shrine’, and friction caused by an official approval of school history textbooks expressing versions of old and recent history offending to ROK Government and a large part of the Korean public.

Nevertheless, although history will be my main focus, I will also give an overview of the dispute in terms of the very real economic and territorial interests at stake. I will try to resist the temptation to overemphasise the historic and symbolic aspect, as one can assume conflicts of interests to be of similar nature all over the world. Even though East Asia has a complicated recent history, the actors, whether they are government, researchers or civilians, are supposedly not intrinsically hostages to their history, and the widespread popular assumption that East Asians ‘just can’t get over the past’ is not a good vantage point for understanding the dynamics of the regional disagreements.

In this thesis, I will use the appellation ‘Liancourt Rocks’ in referring to Dokdo / Takeshima. This is the widely accepted neutral appellation, and since I hope to resist favouring one of the parties in the dispute I will only use the Korean or the Japanese appellation when in close context to a representation of the respective parties’ argumentation. I will refer to the sea separating Japan from the Asian continent as the ‘Sea of Japan’.

I will refer to existing states, like Japan, ROK and PRC, but also to historic states covering a corresponding area. When doing this I will be using the term corresponding to the appellation of the state in its time, such as Qing Dynasty China and the Kingdom of Silla. I will also be using the terms ‘Chinese’, ‘Korean’, and ‘Japanese’ without taking into consideration the appellation of the corresponding state in the period in question,
and will also be using the term ‘China’ and ‘Korea’ to refer to the ‘nations’\(^2\) spanning over different states. I trust this to not cause confusion. The name ‘Joseon’ will mean the ‘Joseon Dynasty of Korea’, not the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, DPRK.

Romanization of Japanese names and terms will be done according to the Revised Hepburn system. Excepted are the instances where a common English spelling has been established, as in ‘Tokyo’ and ‘Honshu’, and in the case of referring to source material which have been romanized by others than me, as in “Kaisei Nihon yochi rotei zenzu”. When romanizing Korean, I will apply the Revised Romanization of Korean rules, except for in those cases where another romanization system have come to be established, such as in ‘Rhee Syngman’. Romanization of Chinese will be done according to the Hanyu Pinyin system.

As is the norm in East Asia, I will give names in the order of ‘family name’ ‘given name’.

\(^2\) See 2.1 State and nation
2. Theory

2.1 State and nation

Today nations are seemingly obvious forms of human social organization, entrenched in our understanding of political division of the world, and indeed in the language concerning states and state affairs. The ideal of political organization is the nation-state, a state consisting of all members of one nation sharing language, supposed origin and history. Although this ideal is rarely found in the real world where many nations stretch over a territory divided between two or more states, or one state consists of two or more nations, it is nevertheless a potent concept often seen as the most natural form of social organization. As geographer James Anderson points out, the concept of the nation-state ideal causes a confusion of state and nation in the language:

While few modern states fully meet the ideal of the nation-state, it has to a considerable extent become a reality and it is still a potent objective—so much so that the concepts ‘nation’ and ‘state’ are commonly confused, as, for example, in national economy, multinational companies, and international relations—all terms which relate primarily to states rather than to nations (Anderson, 1986, p. 117).

Before we can discuss the concept of nation, we must define the concept of state. Max Weber’s definition of the term, which has been generally accepted by political theorists, is as follows:

(...) the state is a relation of men dominating men, a relation supported by means of legitimate (i.e. considered to be legitimate) violence (Weber, 1991, p. 78).

The modern state is a political unit controlling a territory which is, in all but very few examples, continuous, as opposed to the medieval European state which could consist of territories spread over a large area. It has, in most cases, a monopoly on legitimate use of violence and taxation, and controls the population within the territory under state control. The relation between state and territory is constant. The state can not extend beyond the territory it has under control, and the acquisition of new territory by conquest has been generally disapproved and deemed illegitimate after 1945.

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3 Examples include Russia (Kaliningrad Oblast), Malaysia, Pakistan (East Bengal / East Pakistan 1947-1971)
This principle regulating international activities, cementing interstate borders is referred to by political scientist Mark W. Zacher as the territorial integrity norm. The territorial integrity of the state was a principle that gained support around the end of World War I, and the Versailles settlement marks a watershed in the history of territorial acquisition in war in that the victorious states only acquired rather small pieces of land in Europe. The territorial integrity, at least in part, of the state, notably the European state, was respected (Zacher, 2001, p. 219).

The principle gained further importance through the signing of the so-called Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928, a renunciation of war as conflict resolution also signed by Japan, and the support for the Stimson Doctrine of 1931, following Japan’s seizure of Manchuria, which declared non-recognition of territorial changes as a result of use of force (Zacher, 2001, p. 220). Furthermore, in the United Nations Charter of 1945, after the conclusion of World War II which saw an extensive redrawing of the map of Europe due to territorial acquisition, mainly by the hands of the Soviet regime and its Eastern European satellite states, the signing states agreed to the stipulations of Article 2 that all members were to abstain the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity of other states (United Nations, 1945).

A nation, on the other hand, is a far more flexible entity. It is an imagined community with traits such as a common language, ethnicity, history, religion or other aspects of identity. At the same time, it can be none of the above. The historian Eric Hobsbawm points to the fact that it is quite conceivable for people to identify themselves as members of a nation based on quite abstracted notions of community:

People can identify themselves as Jews even though they share neither religion, language, culture, tradition, historical background, blood-group patterns nor an attitude to the Jewish state (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 8).

The philosopher Ernest Gellner also provides two tentative definitions of nation; one focusing on shared culture, the other based on an assumption of mutuality and shared membership among its members. He does, however, eventually conclude that these definitions are inadequate (Gellner, 1983, pp. 6-7). It must, therefore, be reasonable for us to resist the urge to define ‘nation’ as such, and move on with the
assumption of a nation as a flexible entity, and with the awareness that it must be constructed, and, finally, that the construction of a nation is a complicated affair.

The ‘nation’ as a concept is often assumed to have a long history. While the word itself can be traced back to the Latin ‘nasci’, to be born, and was used by the Romans as a signifier of uncivilized tribes or peoples, the meaning of this word is far from our modern understanding of what a nation is (Griffin, 1999, p. 153). The term occurs frequently throughout history, but did not mature to its modern form until the popular uprisings in Western Europe and North America in the late 18th century, suggesting that the modern ‘nation’ is a product of ‘nationalism’ rather than the other way around.

2.2 The Chinese world order

In contrast to the modern theories of state, the traditional state in Sino-centric Asia was less preoccupied with concepts of borders and sovereignty, and more focused on defining zones of influence on a scale relating them to distance from the centre, politically as well as in terms of physical distance, thus establishing a hierarchy of ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ areas. According to the renowned historian John King Fairbank, through periods of political turmoil, like the Warring States Period of 403-221 BCE, the idea of the competing actors’ subordination to the Zhou Dynasty Emperor was maintained, and a (proto-) ethnocentric unity upheld while the influence of Chinese culture and military increased. The emperor was the Son of Heaven, and as such he had legitimate power in all aspects of politics and culture, and his person, not the state or any notion of nation, commanded loyalty, obedience and worship. Even though society was strictly hierarchic, some social mobility was possible through examinations, making sure that recruitment to the elite educated and indoctrinated in Confucianism was maintained, and social order was thus sustained. The emperor’s administrative rule was conducted through two co-existing structures: The personal relations between ruler and subject, and bureaucratic administration. The emperor established a hierarchic network of hereditary vassals who paid him tribute. These were ‘clan vassals’, who were members of the dynastic family, ‘internal vassals’, who could be granted with title, authority or

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4 The bureaucratic administration spread under the Qin (221-206 BCE) and Han (206 BCE – 220 CE) Dynasties.
gifts though they were not included in the dynasty, and lastly the ‘external vassals’ who were rulers of political units outside China. Parallel to this was the bureaucracy of professionals that controlled districts on fixed salaries with limited terms of office (Fairbank, 1968, pp. 5-7).

Fairbank found these characteristics as the key factor in explaining how the emperors could uphold control over time:

[The rule of the emperor] could be maintained over so broad and diverse a terrain and so vast a population precisely because it was so superficial. The emperor remained supreme as a symbol of unity because his officials did not attempt to rule directly in the villages. Instead, the indoctrinated local elite, mainly holders of examination degrees, dominated the villages while remaining loyal to the emperor as the keystone of the social order (Fairbank, 1968, p. 8).

In relations reaching out over the areas supervised by Chinese bureaucrats, the influence of the Son of Heaven’s virtue – which ensured order and peace far beyond China, but to a degree decreasing with distance – was based on the tributary relations with the vassals. These relations could fluctuate over time with external vassals of one period becoming internal vassals in another as Chinese influence expanded:

The Chinese world order (...) was unified and centralized in theory by the universal pre-eminence of the Son of Heaven. It was not organized by a division of territories among sovereigns of equal status [as in Europe] but rather by the subordination of all local authorities to the central and awe-inspiring power of the emperor. This organizing principle of superordination-subordination was also used in East Asia between non-Chinese regimes in situations in which the rulers of China did not participate at all (...). The Sinocentric relationship was evidently the archetype of a whole set of often interlocking relations that developed in the East Asian area (Fairbank, 1968, p. 9).

2.3 Nationalism

We can trace nationalism back to the days of the French Revolution and the popular movement against the absolute monarchy of late 18th century France. The term ‘nation’ was used to construct a cultural unity, a nation, among the people with common political ends. Following the French Revolution the term ‘nationalism’ spread in identifying the new ‘people power’ which had eventually accumulated enough support and energy to
overthrow perhaps the most powerful monarchy in the world at the time (Griffin, 1999, p. 153).

The emergence of nationalist ideas in France and England coincided with the consolidation of the French state and United States of America, suggesting the co-dependence of state and nation. The idea of national self-determination was part of these ideas, but did not yet develop beyond the idea that each nation should have the right to have its own system of laws (Gottmann, 1973, p. 72).

‘Nationalism’, as defined by Gellner, is “primarily a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent” (Gellner, 1983, p. 1). Therefore the modern territorial state should, from a nationalist viewpoint, in most cases consist of one nation. As we know, the nation is a flexible and changing unit, prone to manipulation by various sets of tools. National languages can be constructed, such as the compilation of Norwegian dialects by Ivar Aasen to present Nynorsk in 19th century Norway. Religious traditions and beliefs can be structured, matured, and reissued as a state sanctioned religion such as Shinto in Japan after the Meiji Restoration from the 1860s.

Here, however, I will try to focus on the geographical aspect of nationalism, and the relation of state, nation, and territory, a relation I find highly relevant to the discussion of the Liancourt Rocks issue.

2.3.1 Nationalism and geography

The connection between state, nation, and geographical territory is a significant element of nationalism. The European pre-modern state could often be a political organisation consisting of several territories scattered around the continent and beyond, with inhabitants speaking different languages, and often having seemingly no more in common than being subjects to the same ruler, quite often a foreigner. A prime example of this type of state would be the territories controlled by House of Habsburg throughout a significant part of the second millennium CE. In such instances, the state was rather loosely tied to territory, and, as we have established the modernity of the term ‘nation’, a national territory neither coexisted nor challenged the state.

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5 Territories included Austria, Hungary, Bohemia, Croatia, Spain, Portugal, Transylvania, even briefly Mexico, as well as several others during different periods of time.
With the modern state, however, with its continuous territory and impenetrable borders, the relation between state and geographical territory was established. This gave birth to the idea of a relation between peoples, cultures, and land which from a nationalist viewpoint was natural and fitting. Although the people living within the borders of the state could be divided by several diverging identities, such as different languages, classes, occupations, whether they lived in a rural or urban community, and although the inhabitants belonged to more obvious and immediate alliances such as the village, the town, the city, the guild, clergy and so on, the idea of the nation presented to the population a unifying symbol: The land they lived upon.

The introduction of the geographical territorial element of the nation and thereby to the identities of those who belong to it, was a greatly successful way to create unity in the population, for mere geographical proximity ensured at least some occurrences of common interests. It is also an efficient way of intertwining the cultural element of territorial communities with the political element of the territorial state (Anderson, 1986, pp. 115-120).

The geopolitical function of nationalism can take different shapes. It can take the form of unification nationalism, as in the case of the Italian Risorgimento⁶, the Japanese Meiji Restoration from 1868, or the unification of the German states under Prussia in 1871. It can also take the form of separatist nationalism, as a tool in the process of splitting a political unit to form a new, separate unit, or to merge into a neighbouring state. Examples of the latter can be found in abundance, for example in the area of the Balkans formerly organised in the Kingdom and later Republic of Yugoslavia in the 20th century (Anderson, 1986, pp. 120-121).

Nationalism is internally unifying, within the nation, and externally divisive, and is both a cultural and a political phenomenon, in that it is either linked to an existing state, or aspire to form a state congruent with the nation (Anderson, 1986, p. 142).

But more than being a significant contributor to the identification of the social, cultural group as a nation, the territory became the main focus in nationalism. There was a shift from the idea that social groups defined the territory, to the idea that territory

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⁶ The unification of Italy, see for example (Holt, 1971)
defined the people, which is a central prerequisite for the nation-state (Knight, 1982, pp. 516-517).

One crucial point of nationalism is that there is or should be a consistency and congruency in the division of territory into states and nations. A natural fit where each nation is allotted its geographical territory. This territory is not merely space occupied by peoples, but a defined geographical area culturally and naturally divided from neighbouring areas, defining the people living there. That is to say, territory is, according to the nationalist idea, more than an aspect of a nation’s identity; it has an identity of its own.

The perhaps most crucial element of a nation’s identity, the territory, finds a well suited medium in maps, a medium which can be used as a tool for further advancement of nationalism. The demarcation of territorially separated states on a map functions as an evident argument for the definition of ‘us’ and ‘them’, and the making of the maps can and will be manipulated to suit a cause (Herb, 1997, pp. 7-8).

The idea of a German nation was conceived in the early 19th century, and the thought of a German federal state incorporating all German speaking population groups had its supporters throughout the century, though the Prussian unification of 1871, which was arguably more a power political construction from above than national consolidation from below, put the possibility of a unification of all German-speaking peoples on a temporary hold since large areas with German-speaking populations were not part of the unified Prussian state.

‘The Father of modern Geography’ Carl Ritter (1779-1859) was, according to geographer Franco Farinelli, influential as the first geographer to describe the Earth in the image and terms of man, with major, continental, and minor division individualizing natural objects to identify fundamental autonomous formations:

(...)Ritter’s purpose was to fully comprehend the history of man and people from the point of view of the “whole of their activities which has until this time been overlooked”. (...) Ritter sought to understand “earth in its essential relationship to mankind”. All this is done with an anticipatory intention: “to predict the necessary evolutionary pattern of a certain people starting from general data”, a pattern which should be followed by that people in order to gain prosperity, “which an eternal and just destiny bestows on those who have faith” (Farinelli, 2000, p. 948)
The German geographer Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904) built further on this theory of individualizing the land and used the concept of ‘lebensraum’ (living space), which was meant to describe the natural need of a state for physical space. The term ‘lebensraum’ itself was first used in an 1860 review by the German biologist Oscar Penschel of Charles Darwin’s “The Origin of Species” as a translation of the term ‘habitat’, but soon it became a term frequently used by social darwinists linking Darwin’s theories of physical evolution to social behaviour and change. In Ratzel’s view, the most obvious weakness of Darwin’s theories was the missing emphasis on the importance of space, the Darwinian ‘struggle for existence’ being applicable to states as natural organisms struggling for space. Geographer Michael Heffernan explains Ratzel’s view as follows:

(...) Ratzel (...) saw the nation-state as a natural organism, greater than the sum of the individuals, communities and classes which it comprised. The state was a living geopolitical force rooted in, and moulded by, its soil. It was an organic entity, the physical embodiment of the popular will and the product of a centuries-old interaction between a people and their natural environment: *ein Stück Boden und ein Stück Menschheit* [one part soil, one part mankind] (Heffernan, 2000, p. 45).

The territory controlled by Germany at the end of the 19th century was home to many nations and non-German-speaking peoples, and Ratzel emphasized that the German state had therefore stretched out over its natural living space. This was explained by the lack of natural geographic barriers which meant that the territory, which in the past had been used as a battlefield for foreign powers to fight out their wars, now under the strength of the German nation became the scene for an organic growth of the German state (Dijkink, 1996, pp. 18-19).

The World War I brought about some significant paradigm shifts in international relations. The first being, as we’ve discussed above, the concept of territorial integrity, and another being the principle of national self determination. This idea became not just a rallying call for national independence movements in Eastern Europe, welcomed by Western powers as they found nationalism could counter the progress of Communism, but also for the Germans who saw their state shrink to exclude even more German-speaking populations.

During the era of Weimar Republic (1919-1933), a body of maps was created particularly displaying the spread of German language, aiming to determine a German
nation which extended beyond the limited space allowed the German state by the boundaries laid after the Versailles peace. These maps were drawn with and without government support, by geographers and nationalist, and laid in the German population the foundation of a national identity and an idea of a national extended territory in direct conflict with the state borders of the era. The geographer Guntram Herb argues that this identity was instrumental to, but not introduced by, the National Socialist movement; that the idea of a Greater Germany was widespread among the Germans, and that the tool for spreading the idea was the maps rectifying the unfair boundaries of the German State (Herb, 1997).

A relation between nation and territory may, on the other hand, be volatile and subject to change. In the case of Poland, the territory has shifted multiple times during the second millennium CE. Poland has in that timeframe been part of one of the largest political entities of Europe, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in the 16th and 17th century, as well as being a nation without a state, for example during large parts of the 19th century, when the areas formerly ruled by states considered Polish were split between Russia, Austria and Prussia (Walicki, 1990, p. 29).

The failure of the Polish state and its disintegration as a territorial power did not mean that the Polish nation ceased to exist with it. It does seem to have had the effect, however, that the territorial identification became less important compared with the German nation. The historian Andrzej Walicki draws the conclusion that the focal point of the Polish nation became the desire for a Polish state, while one may argue that this did not entail that this desire was tied to a territorial national identity:

It may be difficult to understand how it was possible to conceive the inhabitants of the former Poland as members of a ‘political nation’ when the Polish state had ceased to exist. At the beginning it was also difficult for the Poles. (...) Soon, however, a different feeling prevailed and a distinction was made between a ‘mere state’ and a genuine ‘political nation’ whose spirit can live even if its earthly body (the state) has been destroyed. ‘Mere state’ is an artefact (...) while a nation is a community held together by ties of common history and by the common political will to preserve, or to regain, its statehood. Membership in a state is compulsory, based on a purely territorial principle, while a political nation owes its existence to the will of its members (Walicki, 1990, p. 30).
The idea of the Polish nation did not become tied to a certain geographical area. The idea of a territorial ‘Fatherland’ was not defined. Instead, a loftier, romanticized ‘Fatherland’ was articulated and expressed:

Each of us possesses a heritage within us – a heritage to which generations and centuries of achievement and calamity, of triumph and failure, have contributed: a heritage which somehow takes deeper root and grows new tissues from every one of us. We cannot live without it. It is our own soul. It is this heritage, variously labelled the Fatherland, or the Nation, by which we live (Karol Wojtyla, Archbishop of Cracow, the late Pope John Paul II, cited in (Walicki, 1990, p. 31)

But even though the Polish nationalism may have taken other forms than a purely territorial one, a geographical identity of a future Polish state was an important issue for nationalists at the end of the 19th and early 20th century. Geographer Jozef Babicz presents the two Polish geographers Waclaw Nalkowski (1851-1911) and Eugeniusz Romer (1871-1954) who were central actors in the debate of a Polish ‘geographical individuality’, discussing the territorial shape of Poland in a time where a Polish state did not exist on the map. The idea of physical determinism⁷, as expressed by Henry Thomas Buckle (1821-1862) in his “History of Civilization”, Carl Ritter’s concepts of regions having natural borders and individual features, and Friedrich Ratzel’s theory of the state as an organism were all important in shaping the Polish ‘geographical individuality’.

Though Nalkowski and Romer drew different conclusions, they both drew from knowledge on the geographical characteristic of the territory historically occupied by a Polish state in their argument. Nalkowski concluded that since Poland was a ‘transitionary country’, a gateway where Western European geographical features pass to penetrate Eastern European features, lacking north-south running mountain ranges as natural barriers to prevent invasions, a Polish state could only be revived if based on ethnic and national criteria, as opposed to the old multicultural and multilingual states.

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⁷ Environmental, physical, and geographical determinism were among a strand of theories of determinism that owed much to Darwin’s theories of evolution. Central to these geographical variants of determinism is the view that human behaviour is controlled by the environment, and that the diversity of peoples and societies of the world can be explained by the varying environmental conditions they live in. Determinism became a popular trend among geographers of the late 19th and early 20th century (Blacksell, 2006, p. 140).
Romer, however, analysed the geographical features and saw a territory that was well fit for a Polish state – the plateau between the Baltic and the Black Sea, bound together by the river system in the area, a state which would thereby include many nations (Babicz, 1994).

### 2.3.2 Constructing the geo-body of a nation

The historian Thongchai Winichakul explores the relation between geographical territory and nationalism further in his book “Siam Mapped” from 1994 where he focuses on the clash between a Western concept of geography and sovereignty with the indigenous Siamese concepts in mapmaking as a means of political power and control of definition. He coined the term ‘geo-body’, the abstraction of territorial identity of a nation, and argues that this manifestation of a nation on a map in itself can create the nation:

[Territoriality] is the most concrete feature, the most solid foundation, literally and connotatively, of nationhood as a whole. There are innumerable concepts, practices, and institutions related to it or working within the provision and limitation of a nation’s geo-body: the concept of integrity and sovereignty; border control, armed conflict, invasion, and wars; the territorial definition of national economy, products, industries, trade, tax, custom duties, education, administration, culture, and so on. But the term geo-body is used to signify that the object of this study is not merely space or territory. It is a component of the life of a nation. It is a source of pride, loyalty, love, passion, bias, hatred, reason, unreason. (Winichakul, 1994, p. 17)

Winichakul’s study of how mapmaking came to mould and solidify the Siam nation in the 19th and 20th century. The British had conquered parts of Southern Burma in the war of 1824-26 and sought to clarify the issue of unclear borders between the conquered land and the Kingdom of Siam. The issue was, however, not easily resolved since the borders had never been defined, and diplomatic correspondence revealed a lack of eagerness from the Siamese side in seeking to lay down these borders in the past. It was evident that the British expectation of the territoriality of the state was not reflected in the Siamese Government’s self image (Winichakul, 1994, pp. 62-65). Even the concept of borders seemed to bear different meaning to the British and the Siamese, with the Siamese understanding radically challenging the idea of state border impenetrability, expecting Siamese and Burmese to gather natural reserves from the same forests, with...
no respect to the imaginary line dividing the area into two political units (Winichakul, 1994, pp. 69-71).

The switch from an indigenous tributary system state, where peoples in the area recognized Siam Government superordination as in the tradition the of Chinese state, to a modern state with clearly defined and regulated borders as imaginary lines in the landscape, was first accepted by the Bangkok elite. Thereafter began the top-down reformation of the nature of the Siamese State where one element in particular became both the means and the end: The map of Siam.

Earlier maps of Siam had mainly been produced by French and also Dutch cartographers, and were describing the coastline rather than the interior of the Siamese Kingdom. The 19th century saw increased activity by British cartographers in mapping the area, but much of the research was done by obtaining information from people living in the region, and the stories they told about the shape of the land seemed to lead to many false conclusions by the cartographers. However, in the latter part of the century the mapping of the region by the British in Burma, the French in Cambodia, and the Siamese themselves developed a territorial unit with clearer boundaries and topographical data of the territory which in time was to become Siam (Winichakul, 1994, pp. 113-116).

The mapping of Siam produced an awareness of a State present on the land, clearly defined by territory and borders. The cartographers produced maps which again produced the idea of the nation’s geo-body. Borders were defined between the French controlled Cambodia and the British controlled Burma, and as the area on the Siamese side of the border became part of the Siam Kingdom, the people living on the land was to become part of a politically integrating Siamese state (Winichakul, 1994, p. 117).

Winichakul finds that the mapping of Siam was more than the abstraction and representation of a spatial reality; his argument is that the map in itself creates the nation:

[A] map was a model for, rather than the model of, what it purported to represent. A map was not a transparent medium between human beings and space. It was an active mediator. [...] Perhaps more than has been realized, the regime of mapping did not passively reflect Siam. Rather, it has actively structured “Siam” in our minds as well as on earth (Winichakul, 1994, p. 130).
An important companion to mapmaking in creating the geo-body is the territorial narratives in which the included are divided from the excluded, and the domestic from the foreign. These narratives will often take the form of history books as well as atlases or geography books, and can be crucial in justifying territorial claims, and where the identity of the geo-body is in conflict with other states, the territorial narratives are instrumental in the identity and national socialization:

Within these frontiers, the contest for identity socialization takes place, as institutions and agencies attempt to create exclusive ‘us identities and, by definition, outsider images of the ‘Other’. Geographic and historical education in the school system also produces and reproduces the consciousness of this system of signs – an ‘iconography of boundaries’. This tends to make space incontestable and exclusive (the purification of space), inasmuch as it provides a specific ‘reading’ and system of norms and values (Newman & Paasi, 1998, p. 196).

2.3.3 Japanese nationalism

Confronted by growing Western dominance in Asia, and the world, many Japanese intellectuals sought to understand and learn with the end to emulate or equalize the military strength displayed. Among these was Aizawa Seishisai (1781-1863). He thought of the Western countries as an ideological rather than military threat, and his analysis of Western superior strength concluded that the Christian monotheistic faith inspired obedience among the people, a spiritual unity and mass loyalty. It was his view that Japan should follow suit with a merging of the animistic cult of Shintoism and the Japanese state to form a state religion under its highest priest – the Emperor. Aizawa called this spiritual unity between people and rulers ‘kokutai’ (national body) (Pyle, 1996, pp. 61-62). Aizawa launched, in other words, the idea of the combination of Western ideology with Japanese traditions as the means to counter outside pressure.

The forced opening of Japanese ports by Commodore Matthew Perry in 1853, following the relative seclusion of Japan during the Tokugawa Shogunate, spurred dramatic changes in Japanese society, culture, and political organization. A relatively loose political structure, with a strong sense of local autonomy in the periphery of the Empire, came under pressure from superior Western military technology, and it became a common perception among the elite that Japan had to modernize and consolidate to survive.
Commodore Perry’s black warships demonstrated the West’s advantage and gave energy to movements for change in Japan, and many of these sought knowledge of Western technology as means to compete. One of those of this persuasion was Yoshida Shōin (1830-1859). He was the leader of a school of young students who fought for the ousting of foreigners, in harsh opposition to the Tokugawa Shogunate that lacked the will and ability to defend Japanese interests. Though Yoshida died young in prison, many of his students continued as military reformers employing new technology and organisation helping the Chōshū-Satsuma alliance to overthrow the Tokugawa Shogunate and have proclaimed the restoration of imperial rule on 3 January 1868, becoming stalwarts of the Meiji Restoration (Pyle, 1996, pp. 70-71).

As Western religious and military models became important elements of modernisation and Japanese nationalism, there were other aspects as well. Ethnicity was one such element, with its origins in the indigenous sentiments expressed in the rallying war cry of ‘sonnō jōi’ (revere the Emperor, expel the barbarians) and the simpler form ‘ijin taiji’ (exterminate the foreigners) (McVeigh, 2004, p. 42) eventually bolstered by the growing popularity of social darwinian or malthusian ideas and eugenic theories. Japanese colonialism can be seen as a reaction to what intellectuals such as Takayama Chogyū (1871-1902) saw as a racial war (Doak, 2007, p. 224). The ethnic aspect of national identity was in time, however, not exclusively expressed as an idea of Japan as ethnically homogenous. Japan was imagined diverse, in harmony with the needs of an empire with expansionist aspirations.

The buds of the construction of a Japanese geo-body have their roots in the early 19th century with the mapping of the Japanese coast line from Ezo (Hokkaido) to Kyushu by Tadataka Inō (1745-1818), his efforts being supported by the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1868) since Russian presence in Ezo and Kuril Islands made a reaction seem necessary. In the early Meiji Era Japanese scholars were sent to study in Europe and among the fields explored were geography and cartography. Mapmaking was standardized and centralized by the government and thus became state sanctioned representations of Japan as territory (Yonemoto, 2003, pp. 173-174).

The relative isolation of Japan, being an archipelago and governed by the reclusive policies of the Tokugawa Shogunate, was recognised in textbooks on geography in
Japanese schools in the 1860s, and these traits were then, and are still today, central to many Japanese and foreign scholars and laymen when identifying and explaining the characteristics of the Japanese nation, history and culture.

The Japanese geographer Takeuchi Keiichi presents three central authors of geographical works in Japan, influential geographers who were central in developing the modern science in Japan. These are Uchimura Kanzo (1861-1930), Nitobe Inazo (1862-1933), and Shiga Shigetaka (1863-1927). Uchimura saw Japan as being open to the Pacific, but that a lack of good ports to the west laid natural limits on the interaction with continental Asia. Uchimura spent much effort analysing the relation between man and environment, on par with Carl Ritter’s ideas. Shiga argued that Japan’s geographical traits were a result of the country’s insular position, and that the people’s ability to control nature, forming the nation, was a proof of its moral character. Thus, he was, according to Takeuchi, not a geographical determinist, though his ideas were formed in an environmental context. He also believed that knowledge of Japan’s geography was necessary for the Japanese people and the nation, and his texts are regarded as contributing to sentiments of national pride over the beauty of nature in Japan. Nitobe was partly influenced by Friedrich Ratzel, and contributed to the field of geography through discussions of physical conditions’ influence on agriculture based on the agronomical technological development (Takeuchi, 1994).

Nevertheless, Japanese nationalism can first and foremost be perceived as a reactive nationalism, in self defence against overpowering Western nations. Japanese intellectuals built a nationalism on Western terms by using and reinventing native Japanese nation-like concepts such as ‘minzoku’, ‘kokumin’ (the former literally meaning people-tribe, the latter meaning land-people), and ‘kokutai’, in order to defend Japan’s rank among nations, and the Japanese State’s ability to assert its influence and fend off Western dominance in the region that was to be perceived as its own, namely East Asia.

2.3.4 Korean nationalism

As Japan, Korea faced modernity with a sense of failure to compete, developing an idea that this comparative weakness was in part due to the weakness of the national character,
which had to be strengthened for the nation to survive. Nationalist writers found their source of nationhood in a history of the military’s prominent role in the Korean nation’s past (Jager, 2003, p. 4).

The growth of Japanese influence as the country was successfully modernising before the turn of the 19th century to the ultimate annexation of Korea in 1910 was a defining period in the history of Korean nationalism. The Korean state’s inability to effectively modernise and assert its independence resulted in a humiliating colonisation by the neighbouring Empire to the East. Korea was found stuck in its old ways, and the most obvious symbol of this backwardness, in the harsh view of many Korean nationalists, and also Japanese colonialists, was the Confucian scholars and hereditary elite, the ‘yangban’, which were thoroughly ridiculed and blamed for Korea’s demise (Schmid, 2002, p. 122).

Korea had failed where Japan succeeded in shedding the traditionalist backwardness and relations to China and the old Sino-centric world order, and the shaping of a new identity where Chinese ideas were rejected as foreign was seen as a necessity for the Korean nation to survive (Jager, 2003, p. 6).

These ideas were born, in other words, out of the crisis that occurred when the occupation and annexation by one neighbour, Japan, revealed the weakness in characteristics of state and nation based on the ideas of the other neighbour, China. The failure of the old elite paved the way for a Korea with a less clearly defined vertical hierarchy and the rise of ethnic nationalism in its place (Shin, 2006, p. 6).

During the period as a colony, many Korean nationalist were in constant opposition to the assimilating efforts of the Japanese Government and collaborative instincts of the Korean population. For example, towards the end of the colonial period the use of Korean language was forbidden in public places, Koreans were adopting Japanese names, and efforts were made to replace the Korean language with Japanese (Shin, 2006, p. 51). The preservation of the language was therefore an important symbol as well as tool for the nationalists.

History was glorified; the Korean nation’s shared blood and ancestry were stressed; an indigenous religion, the ‘Way of Park’, was explored and presented as a Korean answer to Japan’s State Shinto. Korean nationalism found the nation under pressure, and
where Korean identity formerly had been part of the Sino-centric world order, the modern nation was formed with Japan as a clearly pronounced antagonist in the narrative.

### 2.3.5 Further shaping of the East Asian nation-state

A sense of urgency, comparable to the sentiment among many Japanese after the confrontation with Commodore Perry, spread in Qing Dynasty China (1644-1912) after the defeat in the war against Japan in 1894-95. A reform movement seeking to follow the early adopter Japan’s example in accepting modernity gained strength, and many Chinese intellectuals studied or spent time in Japan, cultivating connections with Meiji Era Japanese intellectuals, reading their works, and gaining access to Western literature translated to the Japanese (Zarrow, 2004, pp. 43-46).

Among East Asian intellectuals embracing modernity in the late 18th century we find Liang Qichao (1873-1929). Being a keen admirer of the Meiji social and educational modernisation of Japan, Liang was a proponent of radical reforms in China, drawing inspiration from Yoshida Shōin (Willcock, 1995, p. 827). His opposition to the regime led to him being exiled to Japan in 1898 where he spent several years writing, translating and publishing, in time becoming one of the most important Chinese intellectuals of the era.

The historian Tang Xiaobing explains Liang’s application of a geographical reading of history in his efforts to cultivate Chinese nationalism. According to Tang, one of Liang’s concerns was what he perceived as the immaturity of nationalism in China. He regarded the history of China to have been characterized by isolation, leading its people to refer to the land as ‘tianxia’ (under the heaven) instead of ‘guo’ (nation). This, he deemed, could be explained by Chinese geography particularly suited for stable political conditions, with limited competition from neighbouring countries, while diversity in geographical conditions in Europe had pitted countries against each other, civilizations rising and falling before Europe, in his time, becoming the dominant world power. Liang did not, however, accept geographical determinism fully – it was the nationalism bred by the geographical conditions that ensured Europe the strength to control the world (Tang,
When constructing a Chinese nationalist narrative, the geographical approach to history was an important tool:

Geography proved to be a central interpretive category in Liang’s outline of Chinese history. It functioned as the embodiment of historical process. In fact, it embodied rather than produced history. Such a geographic interpretation of history both recognized the spatial dimension of human experience and transformed space into a temporal category. Space was now represented more as an extension of history rather than as history itself (Tang, 1996, p. 44).

The ideas of Liang and other Chinese, Japanese, and Western intellectuals related to Social Darwinism were translated eagerly studied among Korean scholars. In correlation with the growing influence of nationalism, the image of the world as a scene for struggle and survival of the fittest served as an explanation of Korea’s weak position. This was not deemed, however, as a display of an inherent weakness, but as a result of Korea being diverted from the evolutionary mainstream. An implication of the acceptance of this world view was also the acceptance of the nation-state as the culmination of the evolution of political organisation (Robinson, 1988, pp. 31-32).
3. Historic overview

3.1 Scope

Without trying to be exhaustive, I will present an account of the history of Liancourt Rocks, and the history of the territorial dispute this far. I will make an effort not to get lost in the competing historical claims, and I do not see it as my mission to make a statement on which side is right. Nevertheless, an analysis of the conflict depends on, to a certain degree; knowledge of the rocks’ rather complicated history, since what I hopefully will be able to comment on is the disputing parties’ use of history in territorial claims fuelled by nationalistic sentiments.

I will, however, need to limit my focus to the central arguments of the governments of ROK and Japan. There is a plethora of material available to document the differing versions of history from Japanese and Korean side, and the source material produced and made available by participants from either side in the argument is often inconclusive and contradictory. The analysis of these materials made by internet bloggers\(^8\), journalists and scholars are produced in such an amount and pace that giving an exhaustive overview of important dates and documents connected to the Liancourt Rocks dispute is far beyond the limits of this thesis.

Also, since the case of Liancourt Rocks is a territorial dispute between two states, the focus should first and foremost be on the respective governments as actors. In the historic overview I will therefore concentrate on the dates and events defined as central by the ministries of foreign affairs in Japan and ROK. To define these dates and events I will use the “Chronology” stated by the ROK Government-supported Northeast Asian History Foundation on their web pages (Northeast Asian History Foundation, 2007). Since the Northeast Asian History Foundation was established by the ROK National Assembly in 2006\(^9\), we can consider the foundation as expressing official policy by proxy (Northeast Asian History Foundation, 2007). To state the Japanese version of the

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\(^8\) Web log editors

\(^9\) The Northeast Asian History Foundation was built upon the Koguryo Research Foundation established in 2004 as a response to the establishment of the PRC state-funded “Northeast Project” (2002-2006) under Centre for the Study of Borderland History and Geography under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Ahn, 2006). The Northeast Asian History Foundation has a broader scope, and, being organized under the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, tighter connections with government.
islets’ history I will first and foremost use the pamphlet “Takeshima mondai wo rikaisuru tame no 10 pointo” (10 issues of Takeshima) published by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in February 2008 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2008).

I will divide the history into three segments. The first will be the period until 1905, a period when the status of Liancourt Rocks was very unclear due to name confusion and, by modern standards, poorly drawn maps. The second period is from the Japanese incorporation of the islets into Shimane Prefecture in 1905. The third is the post World War II period. Finally, I will give an overview of recent developments in the matter.

3.2 Pre 1905

The pre 20th century history of the islets and influence over them is a field of contest, particularly for the Korean side, as much of the post-war territorial claim’s legitimacy is based on the theory that the islets have been under Korean jurisdiction and within the influence of Korean rule and culture since long before the 1905 Japanese declaration of Liancourt Rocks as Japanese territory through the inclusion of the islets in Shimane Prefecture. Since these claims are of importance not only to give a fair assertion of the Korean claim to Liancourt Rocks, but also indirectly shed light to the nature of conflicts of history in East Asia, I will give a description here.

3.2.1 Ulleungdo and Usando

The ROK government-supported official history of the islets generally date the first account of Korean possession to the 13th year of King Jijeung of Silla’s reign, 512 CE, when the Kingdom of Silla10 conquered Usan-guk, a small chiefdom claimed to have consisted of Ulleungdo and an island called Usando (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea, 2008). This is a controversial claim based on the assumption that the island called Usando in the source material actually refer to the islets known as Liancourt Rocks today. An opposing view says that the Chiefdom of Usan-guk is more likely to have consisted of the two islands Ulleungdo and Jukdo, a small island

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10 The kingdom of Silla is one of three proto-Korean states (Silla, Goguryeo, and Baekje) in the ‘Three Kingdoms’ period usually dated in Korean history from BCE 57 to 668 when the Kingdom of Silla conquered Goguryeo. See (Eckert, Lee, Lew, Robinson, & Wagner, 1990, Chapter 3).
approximately 2 km off the East Coast of Ulleungdo, or that the name Usando is another name for Ulleungdo (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2009).

This is not the last incident where the interpretation of which island the name Usando refers to becomes central to the dispute over Liancourt Rocks. The question is whether the names Usando, Sambongdo or Gaijido refer to the islets we call Liancourt Rocks today. Generally, Korean historians seem generally to perceive these names as referring to Liancourt Rocks, while many Japanese historians disagree, or are reluctant to accept this perception (Hyun, The Dokdo/Takeshima Issue : its origins and the current situation, 2008, pp. 44-46).

A consequence of this disagreement is that Korean historians tend to regard the history of Ulleungdo as relevant to the history of Liancourt Rocks, based on the islets’ relative proximity to Ulleungdo – it is claimed that Liancourt Rocks are within visible range from Ulleungdo when the weather conditions are right, and that this suggests that people living on Ulleungdo have known of the islets’ existence for as long as the island has been inhabited – and their understanding of which geographical entity the name Usando refers to. Japanese historians tend, on the other hand, to oppose to these assumptions. The history of Ulleungdo is, in other words, from a Korean perspective seen as a key element when exploring the question of influence and territorial claim of Liancourt Rocks, while the arguments and details of Korean influence over Ulleungdo hardly is seen as relevant by many Japanese historians.

According to Northeast Asia History Foundation, the Joseon Kingdom declared a policy of vacation of the island of Muleungdo (Ulleungdo) in 1417. This policy is claimed to be a reaction to Japanese marauding ‘wako’ pirates raiding the island (Northeast Asian History Foundation, 2007). It became prohibited for the people in the Kingdom to inhabit Ulleungdo, an event which as well as placing Ulleungdo under Joseon sphere of interest also seems to suggest that this area was beyond the Kingdom’s control, and that the rulers’ ability to collect taxes from such remote places therefore was limited (Hejtmanek, 2007).

1697 saw the instigation of the ‘Suto System’, where military officials from the Joseon Kingdom investigated Ulleungdo and surrounding areas every third year to make sure the islands and waters were safe, secure, and in the case of Ulleungdo, uninhabited
The Island Vacation Policy was, though it proved to be impossible to fully enforce, in effect until 1881.

After giving up on the futile attempts to keep people off Ulleungdo the Joseon Government turned around, and from 1882 policies were enacted to ensure permanent habitation on, and development of, Ulleungdo. To this end, an official administrator, an island chief, was appointed to govern. The Joseon influence over Ulleungdo was thereby emphatically asserted and further development in land clearing and population led to the replacement of the Suto System by the more permanent ‘Dogam System’ in 1895, a system crafted to govern the island, not just the seas and shores (Northeast Asian History Foundation, 2007).

3.2.2 Whither the Kingdom of Great Joseon

The Chinese Qing Dynasty saw its influence on the Korean Peninsula decline rapidly towards the end of the 19th century, but this did not strengthen the Joseon Dynasty’s position. Rather, the challenge to Qing dominance came from Japan. Japan had been an eager moderniser since the fall of the Tokugawa Shogunate and the Meiji Restoration, and there was a general mood among intellectuals in East Asia that the Western powers would eventually colonise the whole region if let unchecked by an East Asian military and political power.

The Sino-Japanese war of 1894-95 was partially a struggle for influence over Korea fought on Korean soil, but it was, especially on the Japanese side, also seen as a struggle to consolidate power before the unavoidable confrontation with Western military powers. The Japanese military proved too strong for the forces of Qing Dynasty, and along with this disintegration of Qing influence, the Joseon Dynasty’s power was waning. King Gojong and his government were forced to sign a declaration of independence from China as consequence of the Peace Treaty of Shimonoseki, 1895. Later that same year, Queen Myeongseong, the Joseon queen consort, was assassinated by Japanese agents and Korean collaborators, causing King Gojong to seek refuge at the Russian Embassy. After a period in which the ruler of Joseon ruled from his quarters in this foreign country’s diplomatic post, the king returned from his exile in 1897 to declare
the foundation of a new political entity: The Korean Empire (Daehan-jeguk) (Cumings, 1997, p. 123).

3.2.3 Korean Empire

The newly founded Korean Empire was liberated from Qing influence, but the Japanese influence on the Korean Peninsula had grown significantly. The Japanese influence would continue to grow towards and after the turn of the century as the young Korean Empire struggled to assert its independence as a political entity in a period of significant turmoil.

In 1900, Imperial Ordinance number 41 renamed Ulleungdo Uldo, and placed administration of Uldo, Jukdo and ‘the rock islets’ (seokdo) under Gangwon Province. Yet again there seem to be some confusion connected to which island or islets exactly this term ‘seokdo’ refers to. Korean historians and Korean Government argue that this is a reference to Liancourt Rocks (Hyun, The Dokdo/Takeshima Issue: its origins and the current situation, 2008, pp. 56-57). Supporting this claim is the fact that it is not unlikely that Liancourt Rocks could be referred to as ‘rock islets’, given that the islets look like rocks. The islets are also within visible range from Ulleungdo, though Liancourt Rocks are not the only islets near Ulleungdo. Contradicting this claim is the argument that ‘seokdo’ could refer to one or more of the many other rock islets around Ulleungdo. The ordinance does also not mention Usando, which may suggest that the claims that Usando is another name for Jukdo, not Liancourt Rocks, may carry some weight.

The pre-modern history of the islets is in general a tale in which name confusion and poorly drawn maps make it easy for either part to construct a history they find to fit their arguments. There seem to be a watershed around the events in 1905, when the islets through the official incorporation in the Japanese Shimane Prefecture, and the events of this year are central to the post-war territorial dispute. Historians, and others for whom constructing a narrative of the not so recent past is an important element for understanding the present, put much effort in disclosure and interpretation of maps

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11 The Imperial Ordinance says 石島 (rock, island). Whether this means ‘seokdo’ as in ‘rock island / islets’, or ‘Seokdo’ as in ‘Rock Island / Islets’ is disputed, but I have chosen to translate the term with ‘rock islets’ since it seems to be the more ambiguous, and perhaps the option that is closest to a compromise.
predating 1905 and other historical sources, and this is perhaps the approach that resonates the most with the sense of historic entitlement among the general public in both countries. The governments of both ROK and Japan are also putting much effort into conveying their version of the history before 1905. The Korean side insist on constructing a narrative in which a pre-modern recognition of Liancourt Rocks’ existence and the administrative incorporation in Korean territory are indisputable, while the Japanese side argues that the islets were ‘terra nullius’ until the administrative incorporation into Japanese territory in 1905. The constant distrust of the other side’s sources and interpretation seems to put the dispute in a stalemate.

After 1905, however, the historical evidence is much less confusing. There is, at the least, an agreement on which name refers to which geographical entity.

### 3.3 Under Japanese rule

Japan had since the Commodore Perry’s forced opening of Japanese harbours to American merchant ships in 1854, and particularly through the Meiji Restoration (from 1868), become a model for East Asian modernisation in the eyes of Asians and Westerners alike. The military victory over Qing Dynasty China in 1894-95, which gave Japan its first colonial possession, Taiwan, signalled the coming of a new strong regional power and spurred admiration among the elites of East and West. It was clear that the quickly reforming Empire had expansionist aspirations, but since the direction of these aspirations was mainly pointing to the Asian mainland, away from the Philippines, controlled by USA, and the colonies of Great Britain, the resistance from the British and American powers was not particularly strong. After the conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902, Japan’s position was significantly strengthened as an ally to the British, and the influence on the Korean Peninsula continued to grow (Cumings, 1997, pp. 141-142).

Japanese influence over the Korean Empire was manifested in the 1904 signing of the Japan-Korea Protocol, an agreement which states Japan as guarantor of Korean territorial independency, but also grants the Japanese Government right to occupy Korean land when circumstances require, such as in the event of an aggression from a

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12 Unclaimed territory
third party (Japan-Korea Protocol, 1904). This was an agreement well suited to Japanese military strategy as Korean support in the war with Russia (1904-1905) was ensured and founded in the Protocol. The view in Korea is that this bilateral agreement was not made between two equal parties, but that Korea was forced to sign, Seoul being occupied by the Japanese Army at the time.

3.3.1 Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905)

Though the settlement of Shimonoseki had ousted the Qing Dynasty’s influence on the Korean Peninsula and secured the ceding of the Liaotung Peninsula, which was an important area with good harbours, making it an excellent gateway to Manchuria from the south-east, the protests of Germany, France and Russia forced Japan to withdraw from Liaotung, allowing Russia to conquer the area in 1898. Furthermore, Russian troops established bases in Manchuria in 1900 during the Boxer Rising 13, and kept these positions even after the rebellion was quenched. This was a move considered by the government in Tokyo to threaten Japan’s dominance in Korea (Totman, 2000, pp. 322-323).

Subsequently, armed conflict followed in the Russo-Japanese war (1904-05), and the Japanese forces prevailed. The alliance with Britain had ensured that third party intervention was less likely, and the defeat of Tsar Nicholas II’s forces marked the first military defeat of a Western power in military conflict with a non-Western adversary in modern times, arguably making the war a watershed in world history (Steinberg, 2008).

In the Portsmouth Treaty of 1905 that concluded the war, Russia agreed to cede Karafuto (Southern Sakhalin) as well as the southern part of Manchuria. In addition, Japanese control over Korea was recognised. As a result of this, Japan arranged for the Korean Yi Monarchy to function as a Japanese Protectorate from 1905, an arrangement that was in effect until the official annexation of Korea in 1910 (Totman, 2000, pp. 323-324).

13 The Boxer Rising, 1898-1901, was an anti-foreign peasant-led uprising under the slogan ‘Support the Qing [Dynasty], destroy the foreign’. The rising was partially supported by Chinese government, but proved unsuccessful when foreign powers sent forces to protect their interests (Fairbank & Goldman, 1998, pp. 230-232)
3.3.2 Japan-Korean treaties

After the signing of the Eulsa Treaty on 17 November 1905, Korea found itself deprived of its diplomatic rights and was therefore not at liberty to formally protest, should they wish to do so, the Japanese incorporation of Liancourt Rocks when this, which is regarded as an illegal annexation by ROK today, was brought to the Government’s attention in March 1906. The Japanese claim to Liancourt Rocks through Shimane Prefectural Notice Number 40 was announced in the Shimane Prefecture Gazette 22 February 1905, but it was not until a year later that the incorporation of the islets became known to the government of the Korean Empire (Hyun, The Dokdo/Takeshima Issue: its origins and the current situation, 2008, pp. 75-77).

In other words, before Korea was declared a Japanese Protectorate in 1905 through the Eulsa Treaty, Liancourt Rocks were claimed as Japanese territory and placed under the jurisdiction of the Oki Islands in the Shimane Prefecture (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2008, pp. 8-9). This is claimed not to be an annexation of Korean territory, but merely incorporation of terra nullius. The Eulsa Treaty was not signed until nearly nine months later, so the Korean Government was at liberty to formally protest. However, the Government’s knowledge of the matter did not come about until after the Treaty was signed and the diplomatic rights were lost.

With support from United States and United Kingdom, Japan continued to exercise its influence on Korea, making huge investments and exploiting the resources on the Peninsula, in what was generally perceived by Japan and the West at the time as benevolent ‘modernization’ of its weaker neighbour, though this view by no means has prevailed. According to the American historian Bruce Cumings, contributions from the West in the form of diplomatic callousness, scholarly support and missionary evasiveness, gave Japan a helping hand in controlling Korea (Cumings, 1997, pp. 142-143).

Gradually, Korea slid from late 19th century Qing China domination through the status as Japanese Protectorate without diplomatic rights to out-and-out annexation. The
resistance by some Korean leaders – the Eulsa Treaty was for example never signed by King Gojong, but by 5 of his ministers\textsuperscript{14} – proved futile.

The Japan-Korean Annexation Treaty of 1907 signed 24 July was based on the Eulsa Treaty and confirmed the powers of the Japanese Resident General and Korea’s lack of independent rights to foreign relations as stipulated by the Treaty’s Article VI:

Korea shall not engage any foreigner without the consent of the Resident general (The New York Times, 1907).

A secret dispatch of a Korean delegation to the Second Hague Peace Convention in 1907 had not been recognised by Western powers, and Korea was not allowed representation at the Convention due to the terms of the Eulsa Treaty and stipulations of the 1907 Japan-Korean Annexation Treaty denying Korea the right to conduct foreign relations on its own behalf (Cumings, 1997, p. 145). King Gojong’s refusal to accept Japan’s suzerain status led to his forced resignation the same year, shortly before the conclusion of the Japan-Korean Annexation Treaty.

During the reign of King Gojong’s son, Sunjong, the Japan-Korean Annexation Treaty of 1910 (Nikkan heigō jōyaku) was signed 22 August, finalising Japan’s annexation of the country, marking the start of 35 years of Korea being a colony in the expanding Japanese Empire (Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty, 1910).

\subsection*{3.4 After World War II}

As the Japanese Empire collapsed with the end of World War II, so did the influence over Korea. The power shift gave birth to two new regimes in East Asia, both of which were partly under US control. The occupation of Japan by US Forces was an unprecedented occasion of an outside power occupying Japan, while the Korean Peninsula yet again became a scene were opposing foreign powers fought over influence; USSR were controlling the territory north of the 38\textsuperscript{th} parallel, and US controlling the territory south of this divide.

\footnote{The treaty was in addition neither signed by Prime Minister Han Gyu-Seol, the Minister of Justice, nor the Minister of Finance. There was some debate regarding the legality of the treaty at the time, but it took effect immediately, and was recognized by other nations.}
3.4.1 MacArthur Line

With its surrender signed on 2 September 1945, Japan agreed to the terms of the Cairo Conference, which stipulated that Japan would cede all territories taken by force and declared that Korea in due course would be granted independence, and the Potsdam Declaration, which stated that Japanese territory would be limited to Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, Shikoku, and minor islands as determined by the signers of the Declaration, USA, UK, China, and later USSR (Hara, 2007, p. 17).

The occupying Allied Powers installed an administrator, General Douglas MacArthur (1880-1964), under the moniker SCAP, Supreme Commander Allied Powers. SCAP issued directives regulating Japanese society, and also its territory. The directives SCAPIN 677 of 29 January 1946 and SCAPIN 1033 of 22 June (SCAP, 1946) the same year concerned Liancourt Rocks and excluded the islets as well as ‘Dagelet’ (Ulleungdo) from Japanese administration, outside the so-called MacArthur Line (Hara, 2007, pp. 24-25). However, even though Liancourt Rocks had been excluded from Japanese administrative territory, SCAP, Japan’s administrative authority, through SCAPIN 1778 of 16 September 1947 designated the islets as bombing range, causing confusion as the SCAP position on the status of the islets (SCAP, 1947).

3.4.2 The emergence of Rhee Syngman and the establishment of ROK

Compared to Japan, the status of post-war Korea was not as easily determined. In May 1948, after nearly three years of occupation and division along the 38th parallel, elections were held in South Korea after a decision by a UN General Assembly vote, but North Korea did not participate. The Republic of Korea (ROK) was subsequently established by the UN on 15 August 1948, while the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) was established 9 September the same year (Hara, 2007, pp. 21-22).

The first president of the new Republic of Korea, Rhee Syngman, had been voted to a seat in parliament from the Liberal Party in the UN-supervised elections in 1948. These elections were boycotted by leftwing parties, and nationalists who were still hoping for the realisation of a unified Korea were reluctant in their participation. Rhee Syngman won the vote for President in the Parliament and oversaw the 15 August
establishment of ROK. The state was promptly recognised by USA and their allies (Eckert, Lee, Lew, Robinson, & Wagner, 1990, p. 343).

Rhee Syngman’s presidency was to be a turbulent period lasting until he was pressured to resign after the 19 April Movement’s demonstrations in 1960. The nearly 12 years of Rhee Syngman’s rule in the young republic was a period of great tension and deep dividing conflict lines in the ROK public. Rhee was prone to strike hard against critics, and his hard rule made him an unpopular leading figure. Adding to his unpopularity was the relatively weak economic development in a period where comparable economies were clearly outperforming South Korea.

3.4.3 The Korean War

The establishment of ROK in August 1948 was followed by the establishment of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, DPRK, and the immediate recognition by USSR and its allies on September 9 the same year. A short period of non-confrontation with partial troop withdrawals of Soviet and US forces was continually tested by guerrilla warfare and eventually broken after a series of incident on and over the ROK / DPRK border. On 25 June 1950 the Korean War was initiated when DPRK invaded ROK, arguably preceded by several provocations from the South (Hara, 2007, pp. 21-22).

The Korean War and the Communist victory in China in 1949 made the United States review their strategies in East Asia, and the result of this revision was the intervention on ROK’s behalf by UN Forces led by General Douglas MacArthur. UN Forces swiftly restored control over ROK territory, south of the 38th parallel, but the continued to push into DPRK territory (Eckert, Lee, Lew, Robinson, & Wagner, 1990, pp. 344-345), with the ultimate goal of stabilising and unifying the whole Korean Peninsula under a democratic government (Hara, 2007, p. 23).

The UN intervention was made possible by the USSR boycott of the UN Security Council caused by the Council's refusal, led by USA and its allies, to accept the Communist Government, the victorious side in the civil war, in China’s permanent seat.

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15 The April 19 Movement was a popular uprising against the Rhee Regime led by student and labour groups which overthrew the Government and saw the establishment of the short-lived Second Republic of South Korea (Cumings, 1997, pp. 339-347).
Protests were nevertheless articulated and clear in Moscow and Beijing, and in November 1950 China intervened on behalf of DPRK, quickly pushing ROK and UN Forces back over the 38th parallel. After the South’s loss and recapture of Seoul in early 1951, there was a situation of stalemate which was to last until the signing of a truce on July 27 1953 (Eckert, Lee, Lew, Robinson, & Wagner, 1990, p. 345).

3.4.4 The 8 June Incident

The office of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers had seized control of Liancourt Rocks and designated them for use as a bombing range through the issue of SCAPIN 1778 of September 1947 (SCAP, 1947).

On 8 June 1948, a bombing training mission was conducted. The training mission had been announced in Japan as stipulated by SCAP 1778, but several Korean fishermen harvesting seaweed near the Liancourt Rocks were not aware of the ensuing air raid. There were several civilian casualties, and the incident got much public attention, causing outrage among politicians in ROK (Lovmo, The June 8, 1948 Bombing of Dokdo Island, 2003)

3.4.5 The San Francisco Peace Treaty

While US Forces were involved in a war on the Korean mainland, the treaty settling the war between the Allied Forces and Japan was being finalised and concluded. After the occupation of Japan by Allied Forces led by General Macarthur, the question of which areas should be included in the new Japanese political entity was an important one. The international agreements of Cairo (1943) and Potsdam (1945) stipulated that Japan ceded all territory acquired in the imperialist expansion in the first half of the 20th century. Japan was to be limited to Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, Shikoku “and such minor islands as we determine” (Hara, 2007, p. 17). This vague phrasing was partly clarified through later agreements, but whether the status of Liancourt Rocks was ever agreed upon is a debated question.

The Treaty of Peace with Japan, more commonly known as the San Francisco Peace Treaty, concluded the peace between Japan and most of the Allied Powers with the Soviet Union as the most notable exemption. The Soviet Union took part in the San
Francisco Peace Conference, but did not sign the final treaty, partly due to the conclusion on the status of the Kurile Islands, which we will discuss below (Hasegawa, 1999, pp. 94-97). The Treaty was signed by the governments of neither the People’s Republic of China (PRC) nor the Republic of China (ROC). PRC and ROC were not invited as parties to the San Francisco Conference due to the unsettled question of which government was to represent China internationally. Neither were the governments of DPRK or ROK signees to the final Treaty.

The status of Liancourt Rocks after the end of World War II and the Japanese occupation of Korea were among the issues discussed before the conclusion of the San Francisco Peace Conference of 1951, but the status of the islets was not addressed in the final version of the Treaty. Instead, Article 2(a) of the Treaty reads as follows:

> Japan, recognising the independence of Korea, renounces all right, title, and claim to Korea, including the islands of Quelpart [Jejudo], Port Hamilton [Geomundo], and Dagelet [Ulleungdo] (Treaty of Peace with Japan (Treaty of San Francisco), 1951).

The phrasing of this Article is among several causes for the problems in reaching a consensus on the status of Liancourt Rocks to this date, since the status of the islets is not directly articulated. The ambiguous phrasing has been subject to political bargaining and opportunism ever since.

### 3.4.6 The Rhee Syngman Line

The continuing political and economic tensions in the young state of ROK did not discourage President Rhee Syngman from asserting Korean interests on the international arena. On 18 January 1952 the Rhee Government issued the “Proclamation of Sovereignty over the Seas” which proclaimed the ‘Peace Line’, more commonly referred to as the ‘Rhee Syngman Line’. The proclamation was designed, according to the Japanese political scientist Kimie Hara, to retain the MacArthur Line once the coming in effect of the San Francisco Peace Treaty would abolish this line. The United States had changed their position from an initial intention of handing control over Liancourt Rocks over to ROK, to a view that Liancourt Rocks was Japanese (Hara, 2007, pp. 46-47).

The declaration of the Rhee Line was followed by the 18 July Presidential Order announcing that all foreign boats in ROK waters would be seized. This policy was in
effect until the normalisation of ROK-Japanese diplomatic relations in 1965, and the enforcement of the Rhee Line policy seem not to have been lenient. According to information obtained from Shimane Prefecture, 328 sea vessels had been seized, 3929 people had been arrested, and 44 people had been wounded or killed as a result of confrontation between Japanese fishermen and ROK authorities before the 1965 agreement was reached (Shimane Prefecture, 2006).\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{3.4.7 A second bombing incident}

US Air Force issued a request to ROK government to use Liancourt Rocks as bombing range on 20 June 1951, and were subsequently granted this permission. On 6 July SCAP directive SCAPIN 2160 rescinded SCAPIN 1778, but the directive was merely a reassertion of the foregoing claim of Liancourt Rocks as a bombing range (SCAP, 1951).

This perceived failure to respect what was regarded as the country’s territory caused concern to the ROK Government. In the time after the 15 September bombing, ROK sought US recognition of their sovereign title to Liancourt Rocks. The recognition was denied ROK at first, with the US reconfirming the position as explained by the United States Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, Dean Rusk, in his letter to the South Korean Ambassador to the US in August 1951, in short stating that a request to define Liancourt Rocks as ROK territory would not have the support of the US Secretary of State, and that the islets were considered as Japanese territory under jurisdiction of Oki Islands, Shimane Prefecture (Rusk, 1951).

Although the 8 June Incident seems to have been a consequence of the failure of SCAP and US Forces to notify ROK or local approximating Korean authorities of the bombing raid, a second incident suggested that ROK Government was still uninformed by US Forces with regards to use of the islets as bombing range when a Korean research vessel reported, after doing survey near Liancourt Rocks, that American planes were dropping bombs in the area on 15 September 1952 (Lovmo, Liancourt Rocks Bombing Range: 1947-1952, 2002).

\textsuperscript{16}Historian Wada Haruki, citing “Sanin Chuo Shimpo, March 11, 2005”, gives roughly the same numbers: (...) a total of 4,000 fishermen had been detained and more than 300 fishing vessels seized, with the number of casualties surpassing 40 due to violations of the EEZ near Takeshima on both sides (Wada, 2008, p. 189).
The support given by US officials to the Japanese claim to title on Liancourt Rocks did, however, wane over time, and by late 1953 the US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, sent a telegram to the United States Embassy in Japan with instructions on how to handle the issue of Liancourt Rocks. These instructions conclude that US should not get involved in the issue, and should encourage bilateral agreements between ROK and Japan in front of an International Court of Justice if necessary (Dulles, 1953). The stance formulated in this telegram set a tone of neutrality for US policy regarding the issue, and this position has not changed since.

3.4.8 ROK occupation of Liancourt Rocks

According to information from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, the ROK Ministry of Home Affairs announced the dispatch of a permanent ROK Coast Guard battalion on Liancourt Rocks in June 1954. The dispatch was confirmed by observations of a Japanese Maritime Safety Agency vessel in August the same year (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2008, p. 13).

During the years since this initial dispatch, the islets’ infrastructure has been gradually improved. A lighthouse has been constructed; Korean environmental groups have been planting trees and flowers since the early 1970s\(^\text{17}\); a radar base has been installed\(^\text{18}\); a pier and a helipad have made the islets accessible for thousands of tourists every year\(^\text{19}\); civilians have taken permanent residence\(^\text{20}\); cell phone coverage is provided by the two telecom companies KTF and SKT\(^\text{21}\); Doosan Heavy Industries & Construction has constructed two desalination facilities to provide fresh water on the islets.\(^\text{22}\)

3.5 Recent developments

The period after the ROK occupation of Liancourt Rocks was turbulent at times, with the ‘Rhee Syngman Line’ and the zealous protection of the unilaterally declared territorial

\(^{17}\) http://www.koreaaward.com/korea/Dokdo_01.htm
\(^{19}\) http://blog.joins.com/media/folderListSlide.asp?uid=huhbball&folder=3&list_id=9956674
waters being the root of much tension until the territorial waters and fishery zones agreement was reached in 1965 (see 4.6 Economic interests, defining exclusive economic zones). Even after compromising over fishery resources tensions have flared up on occasion, but the debate has generally been subdued by economic interests trumping nationalist sentiments (Min, 2005). Since the turn of the millennium, however, things seem to have taken a turn for the worse.

3.5.1 A worsening climate

Though a “Joint Declaration on a New Republic of Korea-Japan Partnership towards the Twenty First Century”\textsuperscript{23} was made by ROK President Kim Dae-jung and Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo on 8 October 1998, all expectations that this would establish a period of less friction in the diplomatic relations between the two countries proved premature. The statement came after a period of detente in Japan’s relations with its neighbours regarding historical issues, inasmuch as the during the 1990s – especially after the 1994 break of the LDP Cabinet monopoly that had persisted since 1955 – formal and informal, general and specific issues of apologies for former aggression and wrongdoings became less infrequent from leading Japanese politicians.\textsuperscript{24} Nevertheless, it was disagreements over historical issues which made relations between Japan and ROK more tense yet again.

One of the issues that flared up was the controversy related to the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, MEXT, approval\textsuperscript{25} in 2001 of history books for use in Japanese junior high schools, the so-called ‘Textbook issue’. Among several textbooks approved for use in schools was one history book published by the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, and it was mainly this book which was the cause of controversy between Japan, ROK and PRC. The ROK Government took offence with several statements which expressed a view of Korea as a non-

\textsuperscript{23} Provisonal English translation by the Japanese Government can be found here: http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/korea/joint9810.html
\textsuperscript{24} The most remarkable statement was the 15 August 1995 statement by Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II which can be found here: http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/pm/murayama/9508.html
\textsuperscript{25} The approval of is not directly conducted by MEXT, although central guidelines are provided. Rather, local boards of education are, every fourth year in most instances, performing the selection of books made available for schools in their district. In contrast, the procedure for textbook approval in ROK is more centralised (Kim, 2008).
independent country under Chinese influence in contrast to Japan as a country that maintained more independence; Korea failing to modernize like Japan; and that Japan through annexation and colony rule provided benevolent rule of Korea. The response came in May 2001 as a formal protest and a list of 33 required revisions that were submitted to the Japanese Government (Chung, 2008, pp. 241-243).

The controversy flared up again in 2005 when the new edition of the same book was again approved for use in tuition at Japanese junior high schools. On this occasion, however, the ROK Government did not request revisions, but reactions were strong among civic organizations in Korea as well as other Asian countries (Chung, 2008, p. 246).

Combined with Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro’s annual visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, a shrine built in 1869 to commemorate Meiji Government troops killed in action, but later also enshrining the souls of fallen soldiers from the years of Japanese imperialism, was seen as a provocation among the countries that had fallen victim to Japanese aggression in the first half of the 20th century. Since 1974, there has been a tradition for Japanese Prime Ministers to pay a visit to the Shrine on 15 August, the anniversary of the end of World War II. These visits have mostly been conducted as private acts, but there are two Japanese Prime Ministers who adopted a policy of making their visits a more public and official event: Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro (1982-1987)26 and Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro (2001-2006) (Tetsuya, 2008, pp. 198-203).

The controversy regarding Yasukuni Shrine is specifically tied to the 1978 enshrinement of 14 so-called Class A war criminals, arrested, charged and convicted for crimes against peace as stipulated by the Article 5(a) in the Charter for The International Military Tribunal for the Far East27 (International Military Tribunal for the Far East, 1946). Among these were former Prime Ministers and Army Generals, people who were not soldiers that died on the battleground, but were deemed responsible for Japanese war crimes (Tetsuya, 2008, pp. 204-205).

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26 His 1985 first official visit caused so much harm that he decided to refrain from paying future official visits.
27 The International Military Tribunal for the Far East is also known as the Tokyo Tribunal. The Tokyo Tribunal was the main body before which war crime charges against Japanese military and political leader were brought in 1946-1948.
Prime Minister Koizumi visited the Shrine each year during his tenure, and though the visits were clearly public – though perhaps not official – events drawing much media attention, Koizumi claimed that they were of a private nature, a claim that was drawn in doubt by the fact that Koizumi used his official Prime Minister title when signing the Shrine’s visitors’ log (Yomiuri Shimbun, 2005).

In the wake of Koizumi’s visits to Yasukuni Shrine and the controversy over the Japanese history textbooks, Japan’s relationship with its neighbour took a severe dent. A diplomatic icy relation with no top-level bilateral meetings started from 2001 with PRC, and 2005 with ROK, and a thaw was not to come about until Koizumi’s term in the Prime Minister’s office was concluded. The detente under the next Japanese Prime Minister, Abe Shinzo (2006-2007) was not as warm as many initially had hoped, leaving the relations between Japan and its East Asian neighbours at a lukewarm level (Soeya, 2007).

3.5.2 Liancourt Rocks in a period of icy diplomatic relations, 2001-2006

It was during this period of not insignificant tension in Japan-ROK relations that Liancourt Rocks again became a hot issue. In January 2004, the Korea Post, the ROK government postal service, issued stamps depicting a cartoon version of Liancourt Rocks with flora and birds, a move which was protested by Japanese authorities pointing to their claim to Liancourt Rocks as Japanese territory. An official complaint was brought by Japan before the Universal Postal Union, UPU, a UN Agency regulating international postal affairs, complaining that the issuing of the stamps were in violation of UPU regulations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2004).

In 2004-2005, after an initiative by local politicians, the Shimane Prefectural Assembly passed an ordinance that designated 22 February as ‘Takeshima Day’ to commemorate the 22 February 1905 official incorporation of Liancourt Rocks in Japanese territory through the Shimane Prefectural Notice Number 40 (Shimane Prefecture, 2005). The group behind the proposal was the Association of Members of the Shimane Prefecture Council for the Establishment of Sovereignty over Takeshima which had been formed in 2002 (Wada, 2008, p. 189).
The highly symbolic move, the ‘Takeshima Day’ being declared in the year of the 100th anniversary of the Portsmouth and Eulsa Treaties, were seen as a blatant provocation in ROK, and there were dramatic anti-Japanese demonstrations in Seoul, one where two demonstrators cut off their fingers in front of the Embassy of Japan (BBC News, 2005). The negative sentiments were fuelled also by the tension between the countries in the other matters mentioned above.
4. Analysis

4.1 Approach

The dispute over Liancourt Rocks can be viewed from many perspectives. In this chapter, I will do my best to illuminate the dispute as related to the formation of a national territory, and the relation between geography and construction of national identity. It is my opinion that this trait of modern society was in conflict with the East Asian regional world view, as Western cartographic science differed from traditional mapmaking, and I will argue that these must be recognised when debating the dispute today.

I will also try to put the Liancourt Rocks dispute in context with other territorial disputes Japan is involved in, since they are of interest not only because they involve the same actor, but also because certain aspects of the contesting claims have some similarities.

There is also, obviously, the element of economic interests involved. The fishery resources found in the Sea of Japan is a significant factor of employment on both ROK and Japanese side, and the resource management through the bilateral fishing agreements seems to leave both parties with a compromise less attractive than an internationally recognized Exclusive Economic Zone agreement would entail, given that an agreement were to be based on an acknowledgement of the rightful sovereign title to Liancourt Rocks. In addition, there are also worries from both sides that the counterpart is overtaxing the fishing resources in the area (Kim Y.-k. , 2008). Finally, the possibility of the existence of valuable natural resources under the seabed, such as natural gas or minerals, suggests economic factors should carry some weight in any analysis of the conflict. These are, as earlier suggested, neither the most important aspects of the conflict, nor the most interesting from my point of view, but should, nevertheless, not go unmentioned as they are perceived and presented as vital points by the parties of the dispute, as well as observers and commentators.

Towards the end of this chapter, I will also show how the territorial dispute has entered a new arena, the internet, and I will give an outline of some of the suggestions that has been made towards a resolution of the conflict.
4.2 Shaping of the nations

A central element in the dispute between ROK and Japan over Liancourt Rocks is the drawing of maps which may have long since depicted the islets located in the Sea of Japan. Although an agreement about the accuracy, legitimacy, and significance of the information given in these maps have not been reached, it is, in my opinion, important to acknowledge that the drawing of maps have a long tradition in East Asia, and that the function and significance of the mapping of territory have changed through the transition from Sino-cultural understanding of sovereignty to modern perception of territory. We must ask ourselves; to what extent can the recognition of the islets’ existence as symbolized by their supposed depiction on maps be regarded as a claim of administrative jurisdiction, and especially, can this be construed as entailing a claim of sovereign title to Liancourt Rocks?

4.2.1 What do the maps tell us?

For anyone with an interest in the current status and history of Liancourt Rocks it is apparent that an arsenal of arguments are readily available through the analysis and application of maps produced by Korean, Japanese, and Western interests since the 17th century. The maps are of varying quality, as a rule inaccurate, and have been influenced by confusion when it comes to the naming of islands in the Sea of Japan. Moreover, the maps have also been the source of these confusions, the interchanging of names such as Matsushima / Takeshima, seokdo / Usando being commonplace, and the maps have on occasion displaced or even removed these islands. One should, of course, not be surprised by the fact that development of East Asian mapmaking took the practice from a rather inaccurate traditional form to its modern scientific state of cartography, but it is an interesting point that 19th century maps are being referred to as evidence when discussing the rightful title of Liancourt Rocks today.28

The accuracy of the maps produced in the 18th and 19th century was gradually conforming to the Western cartographic discipline, fuelled by increased interaction with

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28 Two contributors to the Liancourt Rocks debate for whom old maps are an important, though by no means the exclusive, points of interest are Mark Lovmo, web master of “Selected Research on Dokdo Island” (http://www.geocities.com/mlovmo/) and Gerry Bevers, web master of “Dokdo-or-Takeshima” (http://dokdo-or-takeshima.blogspot.com/).
foreign interests, and in Japan, Inō Tadataka (1745-1818) became the first mapmaker to produce accurately measured maps of the Japanese coastline, the map being posthumously released by his research team in 1821 (Yonemoto, 2003, p. 173). The maps are displaying an unprecedented degree of accuracy, but are mainly concerned with the coastline, not Japan’s interior or the maritime areas surrounding the islands.29

The seas continued to be inaccurately mapped through the Tokugawa Period, just as the Korean maps were mainly focussing on the Peninsula, without emphasising accuracy in representations of the seas and islands. Maps like “Chosen ryukyu ezo narabini karafuto kamusasuka rakko-jima nado sukoku setsujo no keisei o mirutame no shozu” (Small map to look the situation of adjoining regions, such as Korea, Ryukyu, Ezo, Karafuto, Kamchatka, the Sea Otter Island and others) were compromising accuracy for other needs, representing different East Asian regions in different colours (Hayashi, 1785). The map was produced by Hayashi Shihei (1738-93) who at the time was advocating for a bolstering of defences, especially to the north were the Russians were perceived as looming over Ezo (Yonemoto, Mapping Early Modern Japan : space, place, and culture in the tokugawa period (1603-1868), 2003, p. 82).

Interestingly, when looking at this map, at a first glance an island labelled ‘Takeshima’, fairly accurately placed in the Sea of Japan in a position where we would expect to find Liancourt Rocks on a modern map, seem to have been drawn and filled with the same yellowish colour as the Korean Peninsula. This may tempt many to draw the conclusion that the island is represented as Korean territory, but when we look closer on the map, we find that also the Oki Islands are filled with the same yellow colour, making such an assumption premature. Also, the theory that the name ‘Takeshima’ in this era is the name for present day Ulleungdo, and the impression that the geographical entity being depicted here seems to be far too big for being Liancourt Rocks run counter to a conclusion that this island is Liancourt Rocks. A careful reading of the map also brings up the question of which unlabelled island is represented as lying near the coast where we can expect to find the city of Pohang on a present day map. Can this island be supposed to represent Ulleungdo?

Among other maps being discussed are the original and revised maps of Nagakubo Sekisui (1717-1801), a Japanese mapmaker who depicted two islets in the Sea of Japan and labelled them ‘Takeshima’ and ‘Matsushima’ on the map titled “Kaisei Nihon yochi rotei zenzu” (Revised complete road map of all Japan). Different editions of this map are consistent in their representation of Takeshima and Matsushima, but they vary when it comes to their colouring. In an edition from 1779, both islands are represented in colour, indicating for many of those sympathetic to Japan’s claim of the islets today that these were included in Tokugawa Shogunate Era Japanese territory (Sekisui, Kaisei Nihon yochi rotei zenzu, 1779). In a later edition, the same islands are represented without colour fill, indicating for many sympathetic to ROK’s claim of the islets that they were excluded from national territory by Japanese officials (Sekisui, Keisei Nihon yochi rotei zenzu, 1840).

We must ask ourselves whether the mapmaking of late 18th century and early 19th century can be expected to display consistency and authority when it comes to representing political authority by such means as colour filling, naming and mere recognition. Can we assume that these maps communicate more than the mere existence – if even that – of the islets we now know as Liancourt Rocks?

Another case in point is the map “Haejwa jeondo” (Complete map of the left of the sea) dated 1857-59 (Haejwa jeondo, 1857-59). The map depicts the Korean Peninsula as well as some islands in the seas surrounding it. This map is also being read differently by those with an interest in the dispute, or a view supporting one of the parties. In the sea on Korea’s east coast two islands have been placed and named: ‘Ulleungdo’ and ‘Usando’. There are several problems with this map, and these problems are being used in designing an analysis best suited for the point being made. From a Korean point of view it is an established argument that the island of Usando is an old name for Liancourt Rocks, as mentioned above. The Japanese counterargument is that Usando is not Liancourt Rocks, but the island we know today as Jukdo, an argument supported by the fact that the two islands on the map seem to be in close proximity to each other. This argument can be countered from Korean side, again, by pointing to the fact that the islands’ proximity to each other should be seen relative to their proximity to the mainland, which on the map seem to place Ulleungdo too close to the coast when it in
reality is situated approximately 120 km east of the Peninsula. The unrealistic proximity of Ulleungdo and Usando, if Usando is to be believed to be Liancourt Rocks, can be explained by the limited skills or perception of the necessity of accuracy by the mapmaker.

But we have yet to decide upon the relation between representation and sovereignty being expressed on the “Haejwa jeondo” map. Further south from Ulleungdo and Usando, we find an island outside the Southeast Coast of the Korean Peninsula being described as ‘Taemado’ which is the Korean name for the Japanese island Tsushima. The depiction of this island is perceived, by neither Korean nor Japanese side, as a claim of sovereignty. Tsushima was, by the middle of the 19th century, an uncontested part of Japan. This may suggest that the recognition of an island’s existence on a map such as this should not be construed as a declaration of sovereignty.

4.2.2 Geocentrism

During the dynasty preceding Qing (1644-1912) in China, the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), international trade had in times flourished, and the Grand Eunuch Zheng He had led naval expeditions making seven voyages along trade routes to the south and west using around 2000 vessels in the period 1405-1433. The Ming Dynasty’s naval ambitions did, however, stop due to a combination of domestic turmoil with a revival of Mongol power, fiscal strain, and Confucian scholar-officials’ resistance to trade and foreign contact. Instead of further exploring the seas, the regime’s focus became fixed on securing the territory, building the brick and stone wall around the agriculture area of the Liaodong Province – the wall we know today as the Great Wall (Fairbank & Goldman, 1998, pp. 137-139).

The succeeding Manchu rulers of the Qing Dynasty continued to be more concerned with consolidating their political power on land, expanding the empire and securing military control on land. At the same time, the administration of the seas was left to the merchants (Fairbank & Goldman, 1998, pp. 147-149).

Historian Marcia Yonemoto has explored Japanese mapmaking in the Tokugawa Era, which she defines as the ‘early modern period’. She has shown how influences from

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30 There are those, however, who are of the persuasion that Taemado is or should be Korean territory. See for example http://www.japanprobe.com/?p=5300.
China under the Qing Dynasty, transmitted to Japan through translated and adapted Chinese texts, emphasized geocentrism:

The Qing preoccupation with land (...) grew not out of ignorance of the seas but out of calculated decisions made by the imperial regime to rank the strategic importance of seas and maritime regions (...) below that of land territory. This emphasis, combined with China’s long-standing civilizational definition of itself as the “Middle Kingdom,” profoundly shaped Japanese geographical consciousness in the early modern period (Yonemoto, 1999, p. 178).

Yonemoto shows how Japanese mapmakers concentrated on the main islands of Japan, the seas merely forming the outline of the land, itself not being subject to mapping, often not being labelled with a name at all.

4.2.3 Japan-centrism

Yonemoto also refers to “Kai tšūshō kō” (Thoughts on Trade and Communication with the Civilized and the Barbaric), a compilation of texts and illustrations by Nishikawa Joken (1648-1724) first published in 1695, where the clear structure of a world order, outside Japan: China in the centre; ‘outside countries’ such as Korea, Ryukyu Islands, Taiwan, where the Chinese cultural influence was strong, using Chinese literary language, being subject to the Chinese empire, practiseing Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism; ‘outside foreigners’ such as Siam, Netherlands, Arabia, where classical Chinese was not the official language (Yonemoto, 1999, pp. 180-181).

We can draw two assumptions from this. Firstly, we can assume that distances and placement of geographical entities in the seas on maps made in the Tokugawa Era may be considered unpredictable and incorrect. This leads us to the assumption that the erratic labelling and placement of islands on maps from this era was a result of a mapping tradition that did not emphasize the seas.

Secondly, we can assume that, in accordance with the ‘Chinese world order’ mindset, the relative proximity to the ruling centre is perceived as being more important than any concept of sovereignty. Increased distance from Japan means increased degree of foreignness. Positioning of land on maps could express their relations with Japan, such as Ryukyu Islands, Korea, and Ezo being depicted on the map, but represented as being removed from its centre (Yonemoto, 2003, p. 33).
4.3 Dokdo and the Korean geo-body

4.3.1 Defining and expanding Korea

The colonial period was a time of conflict between the old Sino-cultural ideas of rule and super-/subordination, and new ideas of territorialism and nationalism. Specifically, Manchuria was a territory of interest, and Korean intellectuals argued that the area historically had been, and presently should be under Korean control, as Korea should assert itself between the waning old leader of Asia, China, and the new imperialistic Japanese state.

The turn of the century found Korea in a state of transition from the old Sino-centric world order to the modern era where nations claimed sovereignty and the right to autonomy. The historian Andre Schmid describes the spatiotemporal location of the Korean nation reorienting itself away from China in this period in his book “Korea between Empires, 1895-1915”:

As part of a region identified as the East (Tongyang), the nation was linked with its two neighbours, Japan and China, with their shared attributes presented as a product of a common past that could be folded into narratives of world history yet still show the unique historical accomplishments and future potential of the region. At the level of the nation, the newspapers offered histories that established the country’s autonomous subjectivity, proof, it was argued, of Korea’s rightful claim to sovereignty in a world populated by nations. In the years immediately after the Sino-Japanese War [1894-95], these various spatiotemporal approaches to the Korean nation appeared seamlessly interwoven, serving the purpose of disengaging Korea from the types of knowledge that had long structured understanding of the peninsula within an East Asian regional order centering on China (Schmid, 2002, p. 8).

The lack of defined borders between Korea and China was a clear symbol of the immaturity of geographical nationalism since the unambiguous territorial dominance within clearly defined borders is an important factor of the modern nation’s identity, or at least a goal of such undisputed sovereignty. This border area became a contested territory, and Korean intellectuals like Sin Ch’aeho (1880-1936) explored the ties between Korea and the northern territories, establishing a claim of Manchuria, thereby extending the Korean territorial national identity beyond the Korean Peninsula. This extension of the imagined borders of the Korean nation was related to the increasing
Japanese influence in Korea, and the subsequent emigration of Koreans to places such as California, Siberia, Russian Maritime Province, and Manchuria. The Korean Diaspora was, at first, blamed for leaving the motherland in a time of crisis when they should have stayed to resist the foreign pressure, but with time intellectuals started perceiving the emigrants as retainers of an unpolluted Korean-ness, and instead of further ostracising the Korean Diaspora in Manchuria, the Korean nation was expanded to include the areas where these communities now were found (Schmid, Rediscovering Manchuria: Sin Ch'aeho and the Politics of Territorial History in Korea, 1997).

Though the claim of Manchuria as a natural part of the territory of the Korean nation was not realized due to the relative political weakness of the Korean State in the era of Japanese dominance, the idea is still being held alive by researchers and small research institutes in ROK. Among the researchers mentioned by Schmid is Yu Chong-gap who, though he has dismissed regaining the territory by use of force, still argues for negotiations with PRC over the subject (Schmid, Rediscovering Manchuria: Sin Ch'aeho and the Politics of Territorial History in Korea, 1997, pp. 42-43).

Another Korean intellectual, whose interest in Manchuria was spurred by an ambition to raise the status of Korean history up and above the Chinese and the colonising Japanese, was the historian Choe Nam-seon (1890-1957). Influenced by thinkers like Liang Qichao who saw the world through Social Darwinist lenses as a progressive struggle of peoples and nations for survival, Choe envisioned a future where Korea would dominate and rule the world, in stark contrast to the reality at the time, with the 1910 Japanese annexation of Korea leaving his country without its sovereignty. (Allen, 1990, p. 790).

Korea’s failure to succeed in the present seem to have motivated Choe to glorify its past, a motivation that was also fuelled by what was regarded as a Japanese invasion of the Korean intellectual world, with Japanese scholars dominating the field of Korean Studies, drawing detrimental conclusions about Korea’s past being the cause of the country’s backwardness in the present. Especially infuriating for Choe and other Korean historians must also have been the popular notion that Japanese emperors in ancient times had ruled the Korean Peninsula (Allen, 1990, pp. 791-792).
Faced with this construction of a narrative signifying Korea’s dependence and domination by outsiders, Choe set out to present a past in which Korea had its unique and indigenous cultural traditions instead of being subject to foreign influence. His focal point in this project was the ‘Dangun Myth’ from “Samguk yusa” (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms), a collection of tales of Korea’s history before the fall of Later Silla compiled by the Buddhist Monk Iryeon in the late 13th century CE. The myth of Dangun is the story of how Hwanin, ‘The Lord of Heaven’ sent his son Hwanung to live on earth with 3000 subjects by the Baekdu Mountain (situated on the border of today’s DPRK and Manchuria, PRC), teaching them code of law, agriculture, medicine and ethics. A female bear living on the mountain was granted her wish to become human, and was made Hwanung’s wife. She gave birth to Dangun who then established the first Korean state, Gojoseon31, in 2333 BCE ruling for 1500 years.32

Analysing the linguistics and folkloristic aspects of the myth, Choe drew the conclusion that the ancient Koreans had shamanistic religious traditions, the tradition articulated in what he called ‘Way of Park’, in which the sun, Heaven and mountains were worshipped. This religious tradition had spread, according to Choe, throughout the northeast of Eurasia, and should be regarded as one of the main cultures of the world, with Korea as its point of origin (Allen, 1990, pp. 797-801).

Choe Nam-seon has been viewed as a collaborator with the colonial regime since he worked for the Japanese-led Korean History Compilation Committee from 1928, and since he accepted a position at a university in the Japanese puppet state Manchukuo. This has often been seen as a betrayal of his earlier ideals, but historian Chizuko T. Allen has shown, through careful studies of his writings, that Choe continued his efforts to raise the Korean nation under Japanese leadership, hoping that Japan could defend the Eastern peoples in the Social Darwinist struggle for survival. In time, he hoped – seeing a co-worker where others saw an enemy – Japanese Imperialism would be making way for the rightful Korean rule over Manchuria (Allen, Ch’oe Namson at the Height of Japanese Imperialism, 2005).

31 Gojoseon (Old Joseon) should not be confused with the later Joseon Dynasty.
32 Iryeon, cited in (Allen, 1990, p. 794)
The futility of the idea of territorial expansion of the Korean nation northwards can be imagined to have further strengthened the territorial in other directions where the claims may not be as futile. Choe Nam-seon was an adviser to President Rhee Syngman, recommending the establishment of the Rhee Syngman Line in 1952 and the claim to sovereign title to Liancourt Rocks. In my opinion, it is difficult to not regard the strong and resolute claim to sovereignty over Liancourt Rocks illuminated by the failed territorial ambitions of Korean nationalist in the early 20th century.

4.3.2 Dokdo after World War II

The inclusion of Liancourt Rocks in the Korean geo-body does not seem to have been of great importance to the Korean Government or intellectuals until the SCAP 1778 designated the islets as bombing range and then executed the training mission on 8 June 1948 (see 3.4.4 The 8 June Incident). This incident, and the second bombing incident of 15 September 1952 (see 3.4.7 A second bombing incident), seemed to strengthen Korean awareness and tensions with regard to acknowledgment and respect for what was regarded as Korean territory.

Preceding the second bombing, ROK Government had received on 20 June 1951 a request from Lieutenant General John B. Coulter, Deputy Army Commander of the United States Army, to use Liancourt Rocks as a bombing range (Coulter, 1951). This request suggested recognition from US of the islets as ROK territory, but may even as likely have been an administrative mistake done in US Army offices since such recognition, even on later direct request, was not confirmed in other forms. However, the failure of SCAP and US Government to recognize Liancourt Rocks as part of ROK did not dissuade ROK Government from persisting to make their claim to title.

There seems to be a dual internal and external mechanism in play regarding the persistence in the ROK claim to Liancourt Rocks. When Rhee Syngman declared the so-called ‘Peace Line’ through the issuing of the “Proclamation of Sovereignty over the Seas” in January 1952 the effect of retaining of ROK geographical demarcation as defined by the MacArthur Line drawn by SCAP, and thereby a consistency in what was regarded as Korea’s geographical identity, was a clear signal to other states that Korean territory was not to be defined by others than ROK Government and the Korean nation
itself. Through this declaration, the Korean population was also presented with an uncompromising territorial image of the Korean nation by a strong political leadership, clearly stating that the nation and its territory were not issues for negotiation and an object for other interests to meddle with.

This statement of territorial consistency opposing outside pressure and conflicting interests had a strong unifying effect on the ROK population, divided along many and deep conflict lines as a young and fragile nation in a time where the Korean War had not yet formally been concluded. The Korean territorial identity became the most potent symbol behind which seemingly all different interest groups could come together and agree, and the unpopularity of Rhee Syngman’s regime, failing as it was in providing the population liberties of Human Rights and economical performance, could discipline the population under territorial nationalist ideology. The combination of oppressing the domestic opposition and asserting Korean interests internationally gave Rhee’s Liberal Party a comfortable victory in the 1954 General Elections (Cumings, 1997, pp. 303, 340-342).

A declaration of Korean territorial identity did also include a clear anti-Japanese aspect. The Korean nation was perceived as a nation offended in many ways by its empire-building neighbour since the early days of Japanese modernisation and continental ambition. Not only through the forced agreement to the declaration of Korea as a protectorate under the Japanese Empire, and the annexation that followed, but also through the humiliating practice of forced labour and immigration from Japan. Rhee Syngman was adamant in his position versus Japan, and frequently used strong anti-Japanese rhetoric, but it seem this was a calculated approach to ensure financial and industrial support from the United States, and economic protection from Japan (Cumings, 1997, pp. 305-307). It has been suggested that Rhee Syngman found the anti-Japanese rallying calls convenient as a smoke screen, concealing the fact that many in the Rhee administration, including Choe Nam-Seon as an adviser on foreign policy, as

33 Another controversial issue we may find central in describing challenges in the bilateral relationship of ROK and Japan is the well known issue of ‘comfort women’ where Koreans, along with women of other nationalities, were forced into a system providing sexual services to Japanese armed forces (Cumings, 1997, pp. 178-181). This issue was not raised officially, however, until the 1980s (Youn, 2008, pp. 216-217)
mentioned above, had been collaborators during the colonial period, and had particularly valuable contacts among the Japanese industry elite (Cumings, 1997, pp. 318-319).

The unilateral declaration of ROK territory in an era of confusion regarding what areas were to be defined as Japan in the aftermath of World War II hence had a twofold unifying effect – the fortifying bulwark to challenge from without, and the unification of a nation within. The Rhee Syngman Government thus were able to portray itself as a political power with the ability to assert Korean interests in opposition to the foreign powers of Japan and United States, and thereby gained authority on the domestic political scene, an authority he was able to hold onto until the April Revolution in 1960.

4.4 Takeshima and the Japanese geo-body

4.4.1 Territorial definition and expansion of Japan

As with other regions confronted by the intrinsically Western concept of the territorially defined nation with ideally undisputed borders and unchallenged dominance within these, Japan also faced these new ideas with its own tradition of map making and a set of geographical definitions of the realm. In her book “Mapping Early Modern Japan: Space, place and culture in the Tokugawa period (1603-1868)” Marcia Yonemoto explores the mapping tradition in Japan predating the Meiji Restoration. She uses a broad definition of the term ‘mapping’ to include narratives as travel descriptions and fiction beside the cartographic production of maps to describe a tradition of mapping that clarifies the contrast with modern territorial nationalism in that there is an understanding of the maps’ function as defining ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’:

…the early modern definition of difference itself had a distinctly spatial inflection, for in the manner of the “civilized vs. barbaric” (ka-i) view of the world originally devised in imperial China, physical distance from the purative center determined the relative level of civilization of all places and peoples. Unlike their modern counterparts, early modern rulers not only tolerated difference, they emphasized it as a marker of the subordinate status of marginal people on the geographical peripheries such as the Ainu in Ezo and the people of the Ryukyu Islands (Yonemoto, 2003, p. 3).

This argument clarifies the assumption that the Sino-centric cultures of East Asia may well have drawn maps of the territories under their rule, but the concept of a territory
defined by boundaries, defining and uniting the population within these boundaries which is essential to our understanding of the correlation between nation and territory, was new to Japan as the country were modernizing.

As Japan started defining itself as the natural leader of East Asia at the end of the 19th century, the distancing from the former centre, China, was a prerequisite. Intellectuals such as Shiratori Kurakichi (1865-1942), a professor at Tokyo Imperial University, deconstructed the narrative of Japan, China, and Asia, and reinvented a Japan that was autonomous and unbound by Chinese Confucianism, and claimed that the old Confucian ideals had transformed and merged with Japanese ideals, thus taking a progressive form which was well suited to lead the nation and the region into the modern world, instead of being held back by traditionalism like China (Tanaka, 1993, pp. 150-152).

4.4.2 Challenges to Japanese territorial sovereignty

Just as Korea, Japan suffered humiliations in the 20th century in the form of military defeat and loss of territory, though in Japan’s case this was through the fall of an imperialist state whose foundations were laid earlier in the same century. Nevertheless, Japan was in a situation after World War II where newer territorial acquisitions in creating the ‘Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere’ (Totman, 2000, p. 431) were taken away, and the Okinawa Islands, annexed to Japan as early as 1872, were to be occupied by the United States until the eventual ceding of the territory in 1972 (Totman, 2000, p. 489).

4.4.3 Northern Territories / Kuril Islands

At the other end of the map of Japan, the territory was being reduced as well through the Soviet capturing of the Northern Territories (the islands known in Japanese as Kunashiri, Etorofu, Shikotan and the Habomai rocks) in the short period of Soviet-Japanese war from 8 August 1945. The territory in question was the four southernmost of the Kurile Islands, a territory that from Japanese point of view never had been acquired as a result of aggressive military expansionism, but had been a part of Japan since the earliest
agreements with Russia after the establishment of diplomatic relations and conclusion of the Shimoda Treaty in 1855 (Hasegawa, 1999, pp. 24-25).

The Shimoda Treaty had left the status of Sakhalin (Karafuto), claimed by both sides, aside, but the sovereignty over the island was agreed upon in a new treaty of 1875, the St. Petersburg Treaty. The agreement was that Japan withdrew its territorial claim on Sakhalin in exchange for sovereignty over the rest of the Kuril Islands. Following the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905, Japan gained more territory to the north as possession of Southern Sakhalin was transferred as part of the Treaty of Portsmouth of 1905 (Hasegawa, 1999, pp. 26, 29).

Though there had been armed conflict between the two countries before and during World War II, the Soviet Union and Japan was not formally in war until the Soviet declaration on 8 August 1945. The battles between Japanese and Soviet forces in 1938 (Lake Baikal) and 1939 (Nomonhan) had been fought undeclared, and the Neutrality Pact of 1941 was in effect until the final days of the World War (Hasegawa, 1999, pp. 35-37).

After declaring war, the Soviet Union captured the Kurile Islands and declared sovereignty in accordance with the Yalta agreement between United States of America, Great Britain and the Soviet Union of February 1945 (Hasegawa, 1999, pp. 48-50).

As with Liancourt Rocks, the San Francisco Treaty of 1951 is an important point of this dispute. Article 2(c) of the Treaty reads:

Japan renounces all right, title and claim to the Kurile Islands, and to that portion of Sakhalin and the islands adjacent to it over which Japan acquired sovereignty as a consequence of the Treaty of Portsmouth of 5 Sept. 1905 (Treaty of Peace with Japan (Treaty of San Francisco), 1951).

This was unacceptable to the Soviet Union since the phrasing was perceived to entail that the four southernmost islands was regarded as Japanese territory. Soviet Union did thus not sign the Treaty of Peace with Japan, and Russia and Japan have yet to conclude a peace treaty, remaining formally at war to this date (Hasegawa, 1999, p. 96).

4.4.4 Senkaku Islands / Diaoyutai Islands

The third major territorial dispute involving Japan is the claim to sovereignty over Senkaku Islands, known as Diaoyutai Islands in Chinese. The Islands are presently
administered by Japan and place under the jurisdiction of Okinawa Prefecture, but the Japanese possession is being challenged by both the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of China. The basis of both challenging claims is that the Islands were ceded to Japan in the Treaty of Shimonoseki that concluded the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-1895, a Treaty which is now null and void. Also, Article 2(b) of the San Francisco Treaty reads as follows:

    Japan renounces all right, title and claim to Formosa and the Pescadores (Treaty of Peace with Japan (Treaty of San Francisco), 1951).

The PRC and ROC claim is that the Islands, though not explicitly mentioned in the treaty, were considered part of Formosa (Taiwan). The Japanese claim is that the islands were terra nullius in 1895, and declared as Japanese territory and part of Okinawa Prefecture on 14 January, roughly 3 months before the Treaty of Shimonoseki (Hara, 2007, pp. 51-52).

The issue of sovereignty was not a hot topic until a 1969 report by the UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) indicated that the seabed around the islands could contain large oil reserves. As part of Okinawa Prefecture, the Islands were handed back from the United States of America to Japan in 1972, facing PRC and ROC protests. As with Liancourt Rocks, the US has not declared its position on the dispute, remaining neutral, but acknowledging Japanese administrative control over the islands (GlobalSecurity.org, 2009).

The Japanese argument is, in essence, recognizable from the position on Liancourt Rocks. Although the Japanese Government in both cases recognize and accept that there has been a treaty now being null and void (1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki, made null and void by the 1951 Treaty of Peace with Japan, and the 1904 Japan-Korea Protocol, made null and void by the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea), the Japanese claims to sovereign title are deemed as not being subject to these treaties in both cases.

4.5 Official governments’ stance on the history of Liancourt Rocks

4.5.1 ROK Government’s stance

According to a publication by the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Liancourt Rocks have been under Korean possession since the ancient maritime kingdom known as Usan-guk, which is said to include Liancourt Rocks, was conquered by the Silla Kingdom in 512 CE, as mentioned above. Further reference to the Liancourt Rocks in Korean sources is said to be found in 15th century records of “History of Goryeo” and the “Annals of King Taejong”. This claim, and the following, is expressed in the document “Basic Position of the Government of the Republic of Korea on Dokdo” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea, 2008).

Although the appellation ‘Dokdo’ was not common in Korea until the late 19th century, ROK Government claims that a variety of names, ‘Seokdo’, ‘Usando’, ‘Sambongdo’, ‘Gajido’, all refer to the islets today known as Liancourt Rocks, and that history proves the islets to have been in Korean possession since at least early 6th century.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, a confrontation in 1693 between Japanese and Korean fishermen, Ahn Yong-bok being among them, ultimately resulted in the issuing of an order from the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1696 that in effect prohibited Japanese fishermen from sailing to Ulleungdo.37

Later, in 1877, the Meiji Grand Council of State declared a directive that declared that Takeshima (Ulleungdo) and “another island” (which according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade is Liancourt Rocks) were not Japanese territories, a statement being construed as recognition of Liancourt Rocks as Korean territory.

In 1906, after learning of the Japanese incorporation of Liancourt Rocks (see 3.3.2 Japan-Korean treaties), County Master of Uldo-gun, Shim Heung-taek, issued a report about the news to the Ministry of Home Affairs in which he stated that “Dokdo (...) is

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37 This incident is better explained by Hyun Dae-song:

According to the Sukjong sillok (The Annals of King Sukjong), Ahn Yong-bok received a document from the Shogunate to the effect that Japan recognized Ulleung and Jasando (mismomer of Usando) as Joseon’s territory when he was taken to Japan for the first time in 1693, but that the Lord of Tsushima forcefully took it from him (Hyun, The Dokdo/Takeshima Issue : its origins and the current situation, 2008, p. 64).
under the jurisdiction of [Uldo-gun]”. 38 This is regarded as a confirmation of Liancourt Rocks as Uldo-gun, and thereby Korean, territory, and the State Council’s decision to order an examination of the Japanese claim by local authorities are seen as evidence of the government maintaining Korean sovereignty.

In ROK Government’s view, the incorporation of Liancourt Rocks in 1905, through the issuing of Shimane Prefecture Public Notice number 40, is in violation with International Law, since Korea had maintained sovereignty over the islets for one and a half millennia. Moreover, the government maintains that Dokdo, in accordance with the Cairo Declaration which states that “Japan will (...) be expelled from all other territories which she has taken by violence and greed (Cairo Communiqué, 1943)”, was returned to Korea, and that the exclusion of Liancourt Rocks from Japan’s territory was later confirmed by the 1951 Treaty of Peace with Japan (Treaty of Peace with Japan (Treaty of San Francisco), 1951).

4.5.2 The Japanese Government’s stance

Central to the Japanese claim to sovereign title over Takeshima is the claim that the islets now known as Liancourt Rocks once were called ‘Matsushima’ and that ‘Takeshima’ was the name used before 1905 declaration of Liancourt Rocks as Japanese territory for the island now known as ‘Ulleungdo’. The cause of this confusion is said to stem from the charting errors of European explorers on two occasions, in 1787 and 1840, which was noticed and rectified by Japanese government in 1880. When the Liancourt Rocks were declared as Takeshima in the 1905 incorporation under Japanese administration it was to avoid further confusion. This claim, and the following, is expressed on the web site “The Issue of Takeshima” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2009).

Central to the official Japanese stance is also the claim that the ROK’s reading of historical sources identifying Usando as modern day Liancourt Rocks is erroneous, and that Usando either refers to today’s Ulleungdo, or that this island even may be a figment of the sources’ imagination.

38 This is the first incident of use of the name ‘Dokdo’ for Liancourt Rocks in a Korean official document (Hyun, The Dokdo/Takeshima Issue : its origins and the current situation, 2008, p. 44).
Japan’s connection with Liancourt Rocks is claimed to stem from permissions to passage given by the Tokugawa Shogunate in the 17th century to the Tottori Clan to make travels to ‘Ursuryoshima’ (Ulleungdo) to hunt sea lions, catch abalone, and fell bamboo trees. Liancourt Rocks are said to have been a navigational point and a docking spot for the seafarers. Given the Shogunate’s ‘sakoku’ policy39 these permissions to passage should not have been given if the islands were not considered Japanese territory.

The Ahn Yong-bok affair of 1693 led to negotiations with the Korean Government over the status of Ulleungdo, but since an agreement could not be reached the Shogunate declared the Island as Korean territory and forbade Japanese to sail there. Ahn Yong-bak’s claim of receiving acknowledgement of Liancourt Rocks as Korean territory is regarded false by the Japanese Government.

Through a Cabinet decision, Liancourt Rocks were incorporated into Shimane Prefecture under the Okinoshima (Oki Islands) branch in January 1905 under the name ‘Takeshima’, and this decision was subsequently publicized in newspapers. Claiming that the reference to ‘seokdo’ in Imperial Ordinance number 41 (see 3.2.3 Korean Empire) does not refer to Liancourt Rocks, and that even if it did, Korean had failed to establish sovereignty over the islets, Japanese Government deems this incorporation of Liancourt Rocks as legitimate.

Japanese Government takes a stance on the issue of SCAPIN 677 and SCAPIN 1033 (see 3.4.1 MacArthur Line) in light of Article 6 of the former:

Nothing in this directive shall be construed as an indication of Allied policy relating to the ultimate determination of the minor islands referred to in Article 8 of the Potsdam Declaration40 (SCAP, 1946);

And Article 5 of the latter:

The present authorization is not an expression of allied policy relative to ultimate determination of national jurisdiction, international boundaries or fishing rights in the area concerned or in any other area (SCAP, 1946).

39 The sakoku policy of the Tokugawa Shogunate made leaving Japan punishable by death. Foreigners entering Japan risked the same penalty, except for trade posts like the Chinese trade and the Dutch post in Nagasaki, Korean trade in Tsushima, and other similarly designated areas.

40 Article 8 of the Potsdam Declaration reads as follows:

The terms of the Cairo Declaration shall be carried out and Japanese sovereignty shall be limited to the islands of Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, Shikoku and such minor islands as we determine (Potsdam Declaration, 1945).

The Japanese Government regards Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Dean Rusk’s letter to the South Korean Ambassador to the US in August 1951 as an affirmation of Liancourt Rocks as Japanese territory (see 3.4.7 A second bombing incident), and it is also their view that the unilateral declaration of the ‘Rhee Syngman Line’ was in violation of International Law (see 3.4.6 The Rhee Syngman Line). The designation of the islets as military training ground for US Forces is also seen as a confirmation of the treatment of Liancourt Rocks as territory of Japan.

Japan considers the June 1954 occupation of Liancourt Rocks by ROK Forces as illegal in violation of International Law, and continues to protest and demand withdrawal of every measure, such as the posting of personnel and development of infrastructure, made by ROK government and private actors on the islets (see 3.4.8 ROK occupation of Liancourt Rocks).

4.6 Economic interests, defining exclusive economic zones

The relation between ROK and Japan today is vastly better than it has been for much of the period following the end of World War II and the fall of the Japanese Empire. The normalisation of relations between the two states was not achieved until the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1965.

Not unsurprisingly, the cooperation climate between Japan and ROK had been cold after the War. Since the proclamation of ROK in 1948, its government had been supported by the US. ROK conducted negotiations with Japan from the beginning of the 1950s, but President Rhee Syngman had proved to be quite a tough and unwilling negotiator, deploying tactics that seemed to be designed to make certain that talks with Japan would break down. At the same time Japanese leaders were less than sensitive towards Koreans when suggesting that the Japanese occupation of Korea had been economically beneficial to the country (Cumings, 1997, pp. 318-319). The stalemate of mutual distrust continued after President Rhee was ousted through the period of the Second Republic following the April Revolution of 1960, until the military coup in May

The Park Regime quickly earned the trust of the US Government advisors who found the positive aspect of the military regime as guarantor for stability and progress outweighing its lack of democratic legitimacy, and economic aid from US to ROK subsequently rose markedly. The Park Government involved many industrial collaborators from colonial times whose ties with Japan, along with ushering from the American side, brought the two states closer to achieving a normalisation of relations (Cumings, 1997, pp. 319-320).

The “Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea” that was finally signed 22 June 1965 and ratified later the same year established diplomatic relations between the two countries (Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea, 1965), and the “Agreement Between Japan and the Republic of Korea Concerning the Settlement of Problems in Regard to Property and Claims and Economic Cooperation” ensured ROK $300 million value of products and services, and $200 million in loans (Agreement Between Japan and the Republic of Korea Concerning the Settlement of Problems in Regard to Property and Claims and Economic Cooperation, 1965).

Among the issues where an agreement could not be reached was the question of sovereignty over Liancourt Rocks. This is reflected in the “Agreement between Japan and the Republic of Korea Concerning Fisheries” where fishery zones of exclusive jurisdiction were declared within 12 nautical miles from the coastline (Article 1-1), and a ‘joint control zone’ was established in the seas around Liancourt Rocks, the islets being acknowledged neither as ROK nor Japanese territory (Article 2). A Japan-ROK Joint Fisheries Commission was established (Article 6) to cooperate in governing this joint control fishery zone (Agreement between Japan and the Republic of Korea Concerning Fisheries, 1965).

During the 1970s changes in international maritime agreements set the trend towards an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of 200 nautical miles, a practice that put the 1965 Agreement under considerable pressure. In July 1977 the Japanese government
declared a 200 nautical mile fishing zone law, and though refraining from extending these fishing zones into ROK waters, sovereignty over Liancourt Rocks was claimed and a 12 nautical mile fishing zone was formally declared around the islets under protest from the ROK Government. Escalation of the dispute was, however, avoided, and Political Scientist Min Gyo-koo argues in his article “Economic Dependence and the Dokdo / Takeshima Dispute between South Korea and Japan” that the economic interdependence between ROK and Japan, which was an important factor for growth in the ROK economy, was the most important reason for the dispute to receive only minor attention, along with the shared worry in Seoul and Tokyo over US President Jimmy Carter’s alleged plans to withdraw US troops from ROK and the destabilising effect such a withdrawal would have. An unofficial agreement on letting Japanese fishing boats into ROK territorial waters was reached, and the situation did not significantly change from the 1965 arrangement (Min, 2005, IV-2).

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Agreement that concluded the third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III) which was held in the period 1973-82, entered into force in 1994 after being signed by 60 UN members, thereby becoming International Law. The trend towards a 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone was reflected in the discussions, and became part of the final agreement in Article 57 (United Nations, 1994).

On grounds of UNCLOS leaving the Agreement between Japan and the Republic of Korea Concerning Fisheries of 1965 obsolete, Japan unilaterally declared a new EEZ based on the principle of a breadth of 200 nautical miles, and by the summer of 1997 Korean fishing boats caught within the Japanese EEZ were being seized by the Japan Coast Guard. Regime change in ROK did, however, diffuse the conflict as the new President Kim Dae-jung sought a détente in relations with Japan due to ROK being in dire need of financial support in the aftermath of the 1997 economic crisis (Min, 2005, IV-3).

In accordance with the “Joint Declaration on A New Republic of Korea-Japan Partnership towards the Twenty First Century” of 1998, a new Provisional Agreement on Fisheries was negotiated and signed in 1998-99, coming into effect on 22 January 1999. The Provisional Agreement defined ROK and Japan EEZs, but no conclusion on the
status of Liancourt Rocks was reached, and the seas around the islets continued to be a joint control zone (Nikkan gyogyou kyoutei no gaiyou, 1999).

The 1999 Provisional Fisheries Agreement laid the foundation for administration of the seas around Liancourt Rocks and was subject to yearly renewal by ROK and Japanese governments. Since Liancourt Rocks, according to the Agreement, is placed in a neutral zone as opposed to being situated in ROK or Japanese EEZs, the agreement was controversial. A complaint was brought before the ROK Constitutional Court by Korean fishermen claiming that the agreement forced ROK to give up its territorial claim on Liancourt Rocks, but the court ruled that the bilateral agreement on a joint control zone did not entail a concession of territory, since territorial waters and EEZs are not the same (New Agreement on Fisheries between the Republic of Korea and Japan Case [13-1 KCCR 676, 99Hun-Ma139, 99Hun-Ma142, 99Hun-Ma156, 99Hun-Ma160 (consolidated)], 2001).

An agreement has not been reached concerning the seabed which is believed by some experts to contain considerable amounts of gas hydrate as well as other resources (Digital Chosun Ilbo, 2005).

4.7 Initiatives to bring the dispute to an International Court of Justice

The first Note Verbale authored by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs explaining the grounds for the Japanese claim to Liancourt Rocks was dispatched in July 1953 (Hyun, The Dokdo/Takeshima Issue : its origins and the current situation, 2008, p. 38). A reissuing of formal protests against ROK occupation of the islets has ever since been the most important way for the Japanese Government to keep their claim alive, since attempts to take the case to an International Court of Justice have been unsuccessful. To bring a territorial dispute to an ICJ, the consent of both parties is necessary. The issue has been raised twice: In 1954 Japan filed a suit to the ICJ, but the ROK Government did not agree to submit the case. The same scenario took place in 1962 when ROK again denied the Japanese request to file a suit (Hyun, The Dokdo/Takeshima Issue : its origins and the current situation, 2008, pp. 77-78). Being in de facto control of the Liancourt Rocks, the ROK Government has been less than eager to try, and thereby risk losing, the case before an International Court of Justice.
Accepting to bring the case before ICJ would also mean that the ROK Government accepted the mere existence of a territorial dispute. It is not in ROK interest to acknowledge the Japanese contesting territorial claim since it would entail that there is a discussion to be had about the sovereignty over the islets. Having succeeded in the effort to portray Liancourt Rocks as an undisputable and integral part of Korea since 512 CE to the Korean population, and succeeded in building consent for the view that Liancourt Rocks were the first Korean territory that fell victim to Japanese imperialist expansion in the early 20th century, an agreement to a Japanese request to file a suit to ICJ would be regarded in ROK as an accomplishment of Japanese propaganda.

4.8 A ‘Virtual War’ over Liancourt Rocks

After the turn of the millennium, there was a significant movement that started to grow in numbers and influence, activists protesting the opposing side’s claims and argument, but in contrast to the demonstrators who traditionally use the streets as their arena, the new battleground was the internet. Korean and Japanese ‘netizens’[^1] started fighting an information war, forming internet communities with likeminded individuals, and berating those net forums and web pages that expressed views they found provocative or misinforming. The arena where this information war is most clearly visible is on the pages of one of the most popular sites on the internet; Wikipedia.org.

Wikipedia was launched in January 2001 as an interactive encyclopaedia where all users are allowed to edit all articles, though there are some exceptions. The fast growing popularity of the service soon made it one of the most popular sites on the internet[^2], and the collaborative nature, where all users are potential contributors and editors, made the site ideal for ‘edit wars’ on controversial subjects such as Liancourt Rocks and other East Asian regional disputes (Leonard, 2007).

The Wikipedia section on the islets, renamed from ‘Dokdo’ to ‘Liancourt Rocks’ after a vote had been taken among Wikipedia contributors in May 2007, underwent

[^1]: ‘Netizen’ is a widespread term for an ‘Internet citizen’.
[^2]: On 10 May 2009 alexa.com, a net traffic statistics service, estimated wikipedia.org to rank as the 7th most visited site on the internet, visited by roughly 9% (!) of all users globally (http://alexa.com/siteinfo/wikipedia.org). It is this author’s opinion that Wikipedia should be considered as one of the main sources of information in the world today, only surpassed by search engines, youtube.com, and Social Networking Services in total visits as of May 2009.
extensive editing and counter-editing by contributors displaying a varying extent of objectivity and insight, making the article one of a few well high profile ‘edit wars’ (Thacker, 2007). Currently, the Wikipedia Arbitration Committee has placed the article on probation, severely limiting users’ ability to edit the article on ‘Liancourt Rocks’, as well as the designated ‘Liancourt Rocks Dispute’ entry.

### 4.9 Possible solutions

Several possible solutions to the territorial dispute have been suggested over the years, generally ranging on a scale from fantastical to unacceptable. In the first category we find the alleged suggestion from the Japanese side in the negotiations leading up to the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea to blow the islets up, thus eliminating them from the equation when it comes to governing fishery in the Sea of Japan.

Another, more likely, solution would be to put the islets under joint jurisdiction as a nature preserve, enabling the two states to draw up exclusive economic zones without considering sovereignty over Liancourt Rocks. This would, however, mean that Liancourt Rocks would lie within ROK EEZ if the EEZs in the area were to be defined, as the 1999 Provisional Agreement stipulates, with Oki Islands and Ulleungdo as base points.

A third possible solution would be for the two states to agree upon filing a suit before the ICJ, but as we have seen, this is not a resolution that is likely to happen as of now.

Finally, the last, and perhaps least likely, solution would be for one of the sides to withdraw their claim to the islets. Given the ROK presence and investments on the islets there is, seemingly, nothing to gain from giving up their claim to sovereign title. The Japanese Government, on the other hand, risk losing authority to their claims in the other East Asian territorial disputes in which Japan is involved. Japan also has nothing to gain from ceasing to claim title to Liancourt Rocks since it would entail that the EEZ would be significantly reduced given that a renegotiation based upon Liancourt Rocks as

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recognised ROK territory would mean that the EEZ would have to be drawn midway between Liancourt Rocks and Oki Islands.
5. Conclusion

The pre-modern East Asian state was a state less preoccupied with territorial integrity than its modern counterpart, the nation-state model. While territorial nationalism not only prescribed indisputable state borders, but also gave the nation a spatial context, a homeland, the states in the Sino-cultural part of the world were less distraught by ambiguity in border delineation and territorial fluctuation. As well as accepting porous interstate borders, the traditional East Asian state did not have absolute authority within the territory that was perceived a being under its influence. Distance from the centre meant looser ties to the powers in charge. In the case of Japan, this was reflected in the mapmaking tradition of the country, and the most remote territories were the smaller islands and islets lying on the outskirts of central control.

The mapmaking of Japan, as well as Joseon Dynasty Korea, was favouring reliable representation of the inland, while the surrounding seas were given less consideration. The maps of the seas could give information of islands, rocks and islets, but their position, their names, and, we can deduce, their importance was not of major concern.

This tradition was to come to an abrupt end when confronted by the revolutionary ideas of nationalism and Social Darwinist theories in from the middle of the 18th century. The new ideas put the nation in the front seat, replacing the traditional state, and it became an accepted fact that the amalgam nation-state was an organism struggling for survival in a space shared with competitors. In such a competitive field, the delineation of borders became a defensive prerequisite. Japan, as the early adaptor of modernism in the region, swiftly reformed to meet the challenge this world view presented, and quickly became a dominating expansionist force in East Asia, fighting and winning wars against the traditional central regional power, China, and Russia, a modern Western military power.

Territorial nationalism was also adopted in Korea. The spatial construction of the nation produced a narrative where Korea grew beyond the confining borders of the peninsula and north into Manchuria, but these ambitions proved futile as the country became victim to the Japanese annexation.
When the Japanese Empire fell apart as it was defeated in World War II, Korea was able to assert itself against its former colonial power, and the contested Liancourt Rocks were claimed and occupied in a period of understandable anti-Japanese sentiments.

The repeated – perceived – humiliations in the Post-war Era of the Korean people must be part of any explanation of the zealousness of the ROK claim to sovereign title to Liancourt Rocks and the contempt felt towards the Japanese claims to the same islets. The contested claim from Japan was seen in relation to the imperialist expansionism; from a Korean point of view, the Japanese initial occupation was an illegal annexation, and the reasoning behind the claim to sovereign title was based on discrediting of Korean historic sources, adding postcolonial insult to the injury of colonial times.

On the other hand, Japan was stripped of its former glory, occupied for years and found itself initially in a weak international position. The incorporation of Liancourt Rocks in the Shimane Prefecture was – from a Japanese point of view – based on a reasonable assumption of the islets as terra nullius and in accordance with International Law, then and now. Being victim to unfair treatment suffering insults to the territorial integrity of the state – and nation – when the Soviet Union refused to yield to the rightful claim of the Northern Territories, it would be unacceptable to cede Liancourt Rocks based on unreasonable Korean claims.

Both sides were able to produce argumentation that made it perfectly clear that the islets belong to them. The argumentation is harking back to tales from seafarers and maps produced in a time and method that hardly make them suitable for building convincing bodies of evidence to the neutral observer, but the territorial claim to a disputed area can also be an important and efficient national symbol, a tool in the construction of a national identity. This seems especially evident on the ROK side of the dispute, but it is also important to acknowledge the significance of territorial claims in the treatment of national Post-war trauma in Japan.

And since there are economical interests at stake, with the recognition of sovereign title entailing a substantial enlargement of the entitled exclusive economic zone to the prevailing state, the conflict becomes more entrenched, with there being nothing obvious to gain from backing out of the dispute.
Although I did not set out to identify a rightful claimant to Liancourt Rocks, and I see no reason to think otherwise now, it seems to me, based on the findings in this study, that it is reasonable to assess that both Japan and the Republic of Korea have good rationale behind their claim to sovereign title to Liancourt Rocks, and that both sides have been fairly successful in discrediting the challenging claim. It is, from my point of view, fair to say that there is a very real territorial dispute over the islets. Since a bilateral agreement seems difficult to reach, it is therefore, in this observer’s humble opinion, time to bring the case before an International Court of Justice. After all, that’s what it’s there for.
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