

**“The Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands Dispute:  
Why and how its dispute management system is failing”**

**By  
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**Abstract:**

The tensions between Japan and China over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands reached an unprecedented height when the newly elected Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe pledged on 22 January 2013 that Japan would respond to any incursion of airspace over the Japan-controlled islands by foreign military planes in accordance with international law. Referring to a recent incident of Chinese jet fighters entering Japan’s air defence identification zone, the statement means that Japan would exercise its sovereign right to defend its territorial integrity by any means including military ones. A warning shot may precipitate a Japanese-Sino war, indicating that the mechanisms to manage the long-standing dispute are failing. Adopting the concepts of “mediation regime”, “mediation regime system”, “alliance system” and “hybrid system”, the seminar will identify the existing conflict management mechanisms over the islands and look for the reasons and ways for their on-going dismantlement. Among the factors to the deterioration of the dispute are: the abandonment by the Japanese Coast Guard of long-established practices of fishing control, narrowed maneuvering spaces for both governments that reflect the domestic situation of each country, the Japanese media that increasingly fans the “China threat” among the Japanese population, weakened communication channels between political leaders of Japan and China, and the influence of the United States on both countries. The seminar will end with several suggestions for the redemption of the failing dispute management system.

**Speaker’s Profile:**

Mikio Oishi (PhD Bradford, MA Bradford, BA Kyoto) is Associate Professor in the field of Peace and Conflict Studies and International Relations, concurrently attached to the Academy of Brunei Studies and the Institute of Asian Studies, UBD. Since leaving the government sector in Japan at the end of the 1980s, he has been active in research and consultancy roles, focusing on development-related conflict in Southeast Asia, environmental conflict in Japan and regional and international conflict in the Asia-Pacific region. Mikio’s current research interests include: the new ASEAN Way of conflict management; managing territorial disputes in East Asia including Southeast Asia; the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation as a conflict management regime; and the *Pax Sinica* (peace by China). Knowledgeable in the world’s major spiritual and humanistic traditions, he is interested in developing a holistic approach to conflict transformation in Asia and Eurasia as well as in seeking a regional security order reflecting the rich cultures, values and norms of Asia. Among his recent publications are: *International Conflict in the Asia-Pacific* (Routledge 2010, with Jacob Bercovitch) and *Managing Conflict in Economic Development* (LAP 2011).