

sustainability and immersing students in a context that supports deep learning and directed experiences in working with related issues” (p. 11).

In light of some of the various virtues extolled, the reader is still left without understanding why ESD is seen as paramount in pushing the ecological limits of societies and has been implemented poorly and with mixed results. At times, the book reads like a collection of isolated cases that have been successful in promoting aspects of ESD that have worked in these contexts for a myriad of reasons, but would have trouble being transplanted into other contexts. As such, different regions often emphasize various elements of ESD without recognizing that ESD “... is distinctive in its holistic and interdisciplinary nature, as well as its emphasis on leading to social change towards sustainability, and hence its emphasis on helping students to adopt sustainable behaviours and perspectives rather than simply learning about relevant issues” (p. 9). While the authors highlight that most of the findings are generalizations, they are quick to warn that “the studies are not to be taken to be generalizable” (p. 19). In this vein, the book is geared ideally to both students and practitioners who are interested in getting a general overview of ESD in SIDS. Thus, the book is a good starting point for people in SIDS who are looking for a comprehensive overview of some of the successes and challenges that similar countries have faced in developing and implementing ESD.

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Tim F. Liao, Kimie Hara & Krista Wiegand (Eds.). (2015). *The China-Japan border dispute: Islands of contention in multidisciplinary perspective*. Farnham: Ashgate. Hbk. xii+197pp+index. ISBN: 978-1-4724-4299-4. £60 stg. Website price: £54 stg.

Shicun Wu & Keyuan Zou (Eds.). (2014). *Non-traditional security issues and the South China Sea: Shaping a new framework for cooperation*. Farnham: Ashgate. Hbk. xiv+255pp+index. ISBN: 978-1-4094-6193-7. £95 stg. Website price: £85.50stg.

Historically, many small islands have often been coveted not so much for whatever meagre natural resources they may possess, but as strategic locations to powers aspiring to become regional hegemony. Such ambitions have taken on an added dimension since the coming into force of the UN Conference on the Law of the Sea in 1994, whereby islands can now also command a territorial zone extending 12 miles beyond their shore; and – if deemed to be naturally formed and capable of sustaining economic life – even a 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone, securing the rights to fish and scour for under-sea resources.

The world continues to watch nervously, even incredulously, as reefs and shoals, as well as small rocks and islands, become strategic pawns in regional power plays. Two such regional hot spots are the East and South China Seas, where China’s flexing of its rediscovered clout extends to manoeuvres and initiatives that have kept various neighbouring countries on edge, and even restored a semblance of a US-led coalition united in its uncertainty of the motives of Beijing. The focus in the East China Sea lies squarely on an

archipelago called Diaoyu Dao by China, Diaoyutai by Taiwan and Senkaku by Japan. Occupied by Japan in 1895 after having been declared *terra nullius* by Tokyo, Beijing has argued that these islands were actually part of the spoils of the Sino-Japanese war that also ended in 1895; as such, they should have been returned to China as part of the agreements signed at the end of the Second World War. Nevertheless, these islands continue to be notionally administered by Japan via Ishigaki City, in Okinawa prefecture. A tense cat-and-mouse game continues in the waters around the islands involving coastguard vessels from both sides, as well as airplanes: Japan scrambled fighter jets to prevent Chinese incursions 117 times between July and September 2015, up from 103 times in the same period in 2014. Human error or accident in such a tense atmosphere can easily see the current stalemate escalate out of hand.

The situation is more complex in the South China Sea. There, China is staking title to a large body of water that is critical to international commerce and navigation. It is boosting its claims by actively building up a series of islets by pumping sand to extend land areas and then constructing lighthouses, ports and airfields on their reclaimed land; it is also sending out naval patrols as well as drilling platforms to undertake oil and gas deposit explorations. At least six neighbouring countries – Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam – are not amused. In October 2015, the *USS Lassen*, a guided-missile destroyer, sailed closer than 12 miles of one of the islands that are being artificially augmented by China. The US Secretary of Defence asserted that this US mission was an expression of the right to freedom of navigation. Beijing protested and stated that it is “not frightened to fight a war” in the region.

This is the very tense situation that has sparked a considerable literature over the past few years. The tenet of such texts is either to propose legitimacy to one party or another over its claims to the waters and/or islands in the disputed regions; or else to seek to come up with a mono or multi-disciplinary perspective towards a better understanding of the origins of these conflicts, possibly hinting at solutions, often in the context of the need to re-examine the place and role of a rising China (and a declining USA and Japan?) in the 21st century.

This is not “much ado about nothing”, as many western observers may be led to think. The volume edited by Liao, Hara and Weigand does an excellent job at pitching the Diaoyu Dao / Senkaku dispute in the context of a deeply-rooted historical rivalry and animosity and ‘collective memory’ between China and Japan, while also including fair treatment to such matters as Okinawa and Taiwan, to muddy the waters and acknowledge the complexity of the case. *The China-Japan border dispute* is neatly organized into three sections, looking at historical, legal and socio-political considerations respectively. Some of the authors in this text continue to propose a constructive role for international law in providing a mechanism for mediation and possible resolution to the impasse; but China is unlikely to accept any such ‘interference’ to what it considers to be a matter of national pride. My favourite paper in this collection is the concluding one by Paul Midford. From his base in Trondheim, Norway, Midford is aware of Svalbard, an archipelago that is governed by one country (Norway) but which allows free access to citizens that are signatory to its international treaty: it is indeed the only territory in western Europe where non-Europeans do not need a visa to enter and work (though these may nevertheless still require a visa to enter Norway before flying to Longyearbyen). The China Sea affair can benefit from a wider range of examples of islands that, like Svalbard, have avoided the ‘zero-sum’ game approach to conflict resolution that will surely rattle China and the various other parties.

While the search for ‘win-win’ scenarios and solutions goes on, there are various initiatives that seek to foster confidence and security building measures (CSBMs) to lower tensions, reduce fear of attack by both (or more) parties, and build relationships of trust and cooperation. A scurry of initiatives are taking place, fostering cooperation amongst scientists at a civil society level but encouraging further embedding in and integration of (mainly) China into multi-lateral international affairs, including policing against piracy in the Western Indian Ocean. This builds social capital, developing inter-cultural understanding and promotes joint visions and operations in the South China Sea, which, apart from being the channel of \$5 trillion of seaborne trade per annum, is also vulnerable to natural hazards (including risk of tsunami) and environmental degradation. It is such “non-traditional security issues” that form the focus of this interesting book. The co-editors and contributing authors of *Non-traditional security issues and the South China Sea* spy an opportunity for de-escalation via regional cooperation in these ‘soft’ areas of diplomacy and international relations. A case in point is ASEAN, the Association of South-East Asian Nations, where Indonesia is the informal lead nation, and which holds regular ‘+ China’ summits. Such CSBMs should hopefully lead – as the book’s co-editors opine – to regional security and order (p. 13). In fact, energy-related development cooperation has long been suggested as a possible way forward even for the East China Sea confrontation. The trouble here is the chicken-and-egg conundrum: yes, cooperation can build trust and good faith; but: trust and good faith are also needed to launch and develop cooperation, particularly at official levels; and such assets may be in very short supply as long as governments peddle and fan nationalism to solicit public approval for their policies.

These two books, both published by Ashgate, proffer important and timely information about the past and recommendations about the possible futures of a tense and sensitive region that has been catapulted to world attention. I recommend both volumes to scholars of international relations, East Asian studies and peace and conflict studies.

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~~John Urry (2014). *Offshoring*. Cambridge: Polity Press. Hbk (ISBN: 978-0-7456-6485-9; €62.50); pbk (ISBN: 978-0-7456-6486-6; €18.80) and e-book (ISBN: 978-0-7456-8462-8; €14.99).~~

~~What have Manchester United Football Club, Trafigura, the island of St Barts, pirates, hedge funds, Radio Caroline, the only seven star hotel in the world, The Waste Makers, Enron and extraordinary rendition have in common? They all find a place in this well-documented and impressive work, which unveils the networks of concealment, wealth, evasion, excess and power which lie at the root of the concept of offshoring. Indeed, Urry reserves some harsh words to his subject: “Offshoring erodes ‘democracy’ and, more generally, notions of fairness within and between societies” (p. 10). He also describes it as “an account that emphasizes avoidance, rule-breaking, irresponsibility, and secrets as the ‘rich class’ remade the world in its interests” (p. 14). Offshoring is about how the rich are allowed and encouraged to steal a couple of marches over the rest, which, at little cost, enable them to become even richer. The~~