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**Much Ado over Small Islands: The Sino-Japanese Confrontation over Senkaku/Diaoyu1**

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More than six decades from the San Francisco Treaty that purportedly resolved the Asia-Pacific War and created a system of peace, East Asia in 2013 remains troubled by the question of sovereignty over a group of tiny, uninhabited islands. The governments of Japan, China, and Taiwan all covet and claim sovereignty over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands.

These tiny islands, together with other scattered outcroppings across the Western Pacific, assume today some of the weight that attached almost a century ago to the vast domain of Northeast China (“Manchuria”), with comparable potential to plunge the region into conflict. If the countries of the region are to transcend the 19th and 20th century eras of Japanese imperialism and US Cold War hegemony and construct a 21st century of peace, cooperation, and prosperity, the Senkaku/Diaoyu issue must somehow first be addressed.

**1. The Long View**

The islands known in Japanese as Senkaku and in Chinese as Diaoyu are little more than rocks in the ocean, but they are rocks on which there is a real prospect of peace and cooperation in the region foundering.It is a problem that I first addressed just over 40 years ago, and on which I have published other occasional essays more recently.2

The Senkaku/Diaoyu problem calls to mind the research on which I once engaged on the “Manchurian problem,” which also arose over how to draw a line dividing “our” from “your” territory, a life-line that absolutely had to be protected. Because the line early 20th century Japan then drew was unacceptable to China, the dispute over it led in due course to the catastrophe of war. “Senkaku” is of course not to be compared to the vast domains that were then at stake in “Manchuria,” but its importance far outweighs its barren and unpopulated rocks and focuses similarly passionate, uncompromising sentiment.

While economic integration in East Asia proceeds by leaps and bounds and popular culture flows freely, the region has little sense of shared history, identity or direction and it is still framed by the security architecture of the Cold War. The difficulty is compounded by the process of gradual, but fundamental, shift in the power balance that prevailed throughout the 20th century. China rises and Japan declines, a phenomenon that may be encapsulated in a single set of statistics. The Japan that as proportion of global GDP was 15 per cent in 1990 fell below 10 per cent in 2008 and has been projected to fall to 6 per cent in 2030 and 3.2 per cent in 2060, while the China that was 2 per cent in 1990 is predicted to reach 25 per cent in 2030 and 27.8 per cent in 2060.3 It is that shift in relative weight, perhaps more than anything that disturbs Japan. Islands that in themselves are trivial come to carry heavy symbolic weight.

In the long historical perspective, it is possible to view the past millennium in Asia as a sequence of more-or-less hegemonic orders: the *Pax Mongolica* (1206 to 1368), the Chinese “Tribute” system or *Pax Sinica* of Ming and Qing dynasties (1368 to 1911), the short-lived *Pax Nipponica* (roughly 1931 to 1945), and the still-continuing *Pax Americana* (born with US victory in the Asia-Pacific War and enshrined with the San Francisco Treaty in effect from 1952). The last of these, however, entering upon its seventh decade shows signs of severe strain, not least because China is too great and too tied to all the major US alliance parties to be excluded or contained. President Obama may yet succeed in renewing and reinforcing the fabric of Pax Americana alliances, and thereby in maintaining its military and political pre-eminence under the Pacific Tilt doctrine declared early in 2012, but a very different possibility is occasionally to be glimpsed: a post-hegemonic order, a concert of states or commonwealth, a *Pax Asia*.

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Looking towards such a future, then Japanese Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo agreed with China’s president Hu Jintao at their summit meeting in February 2008 that the East China Sea should be made a “Sea of Peace, Cooperation and Friendship,”4 and at the bilateral summit in September, 2009, a year and a half later, Hatoyama Yukio proposed that it be transformed into a “Sea of Fraternity” (*Yuai no umi*),5 to which Hu is said to have responded positively. Three months later, in the heyday of the newly elected Democratic Party government in Japan, Ozawa Ichiro led a, 600-strong, semi-official friendship mission to Beijing. That moment was the high point of a mood of empathetic cooperation. It pointed to a possible way forward, one in which sovereignty issues would be shelved and the development of resources resolved cooperatively (as indeed foreshadowed by several agreements reached and to some extent implemented during the early 21st century years), evolving gradually into some kind of regional community. The mood did not last long, however, and by 2013 it seemed an age away.

**2. What are These Islands and What is Their Significance?**

The Senkaku/Diaoyu islands group comprises basically five uninhabited islands, more correctly islets (plus several even smaller outcrops), known respectively under their Japanese and Chinese names as Uotsuri/Diaoyudao, Kita Kojima/Bei Xiaodao, Minami Kojima/Nan Xiaodao, Kuba/Huangwei and Taisho/Chiwei. The largest (Uotsuri/Diaoyu; literally “Fish-catch” in Japanese, “Catch-fish” in Chinese) is 4.3 square kilometres and the total area of all five just 6.3 square kilometres. The islands are spread over a wide area of sea, about 27 kilometres separating the core cluster of three islands (Uotsuri, Kita Kojima and Minami Kojima) from Kuba, and about 110 from Taisho.6 They are located in relatively shallow waters at the edge of the Chinese continental shelf, 330 kilometres east of the China mainland coast, 170 kilometres northeast of Taiwan, and about the same distance north of Yonaguni (or Ishigaki) islands in the Okinawa group, separated from the main Okinawan islands by a deep (maximum 2,940 metres)7 underwater trench known as the “Okinawa Trough” or in China as the “Sino-Ryukyu Trough.”

Chinese documents from the 14th century record and name the islands as important navigational points on the maritime route between coastal China (Foochow) and the Ryukyu kingdom capital at Shuri, especially necessary for tribute missions during Ming and Qing dynasties. China sent the Ryukyu kingdom ten such missions and Ryukyu dispatched 281 to the Chinese court in return between the 16th and 19th centuries. Ryukyuan ships heading farther afield, on trading missions to Southeast Asia, also almost certainly used this same route.8 Ownership, however, did not greatly concern anyone. The European state system with its Westphalian notions of sovereignty was an alien concept. It appears that nobody actually settled there.

Two late 19th century developments wrought decisive change. In 1879 the Meiji government forcibly extinguished the Ryukyu kingdom’s residual sovereignty (building upon the partial subjection accomplished by Satsuma following its invasion in 1609) and incorporated the Ryukyus (as Okinawa) within the Japanese state, unilaterally severing the Ryukyu’s membership in the Beijing-centred tribute system and bringing the modern, imperialist state system that would replace it closer to Senkaku/Diaoyu.

As China protested the Japanese state’s encroachments in the East China Sea, US president Grant played a role in attempting to mediate a Sino-Japanese settlement. What Japan most sought, however, was a comprehensive revision of the US-Japan Treaty that opened relations between the two countries in 1871. It wanted the same unequal treaty rights (“most favoured nation” status) in mainland China as were enjoyed by the established imperialist powers. In return it offered to split the Ryukyus: ceding the south-western islands of Miyako and the Yaeyama’s to China. China countered with a proposal for a three way split: the northern islands, including Amami, to Meiji Japan, the main island of Okinawa to become independent under a restored Ryukyu/Okinawa king, and the southwest islands ceded to China.9 Both proposals agreed that the Miyako and Yaeyama island groups, that is to say the Okinawan islands closest to the Senkaku/Diaoyu’s, should be China’s. A treaty in line with the Chinese proposal was drawn up early in 1881 but not actually adopted because of opposition at high levels within the Chinese government.10 Then pre-eminent Chinese leader Li Hongjiang is said to have objected that “Ryukyu is neither Chinese nor Japanese territory, but a sovereign state.”11 When China, one hundred and thirty-two years later, protested that there had never been an agreement between the two countries on the status of Okinawa, and urging that it be the subject of discussions, Japan and Okinawa itself were shocked, but it was stating a simple historical fact.12

The unilateral assimilation to Japan of Ryukyu as Okinawa in 1879 in no way affected the status of the tiny Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. But just five years later, in 1884, a Japanese merchant, Koga Tatsushiro, settled on Senkaku. Initiating a business in collecting albatross feathers and tortoise shells, he submitted a claim through the newly established Okinawa prefecture to have them declared Japanese territory on grounds of being unclaimed and unoccupied.

In other words, Koga’s 1884 Senkaku application related to territory that was of such little import to Japan that it had been ready just years earlier to cede it (and much more) to China as part of a frontier grand bargain. The Meiji government in Tokyo delayed a decision on this matter for a full ten years, fearful of rousing China’s suspicions at a time when it worried that China might enjoy naval supremacy. That anxiety only eased following the major battles in which it decisively defeated Qing China in the Sino-Japanese War, whereupon the Japanese cabinet resolved in January 1895 to accept the Koga proposal. Japan annexed two of the islands (Uotsuri and Kuba), as part of Yaeyama County, Okinawa prefecture. It then (1896) leased four (Uotsuri, Kota Kojima, Minami Kojima, and Kuba) to Koga on a thirty year, fee-less, basis, adopted the name “Senkaku Islands” (in 1900) as a translation of the name “Pinnacle Rocks” found on British naval charts, and in 1926 converted the four island lease to a freehold grant to the Koga family.13 The *fifth* island, Taisho/Chiwei, was never part of the Koga family domain, but was simply claimed by the Government of Japan in 1921.

The Japanese annexation was a diplomatic secret, not published until many years later in the post-war compilations of Japanese diplomatic records, and the “markers” authorized by the 1895 cabinet resolution were not actually set up on the islands until May 1969.14

Through the Japanese empire in East Asia from 1895, Koga maintained his business, expanding it to employ perhaps as many as 248 people (99 households) by around 1910,15 catching, drying, processing, and canning fish, only withdrawing around 1940, abandoning the islands under the shadow of war.

Asia then had much greater questions to worry about, and Senkaku was of interest to no one. In the immediate post-war years Japan’s Foreign Ministry made only brief reference to them, dismissing them as “of scarcely any importance” (*juyosei wa hotondo nai*).16 China (Beijing)’s Foreign Ministry seems also to have had no interest in them. In a draft paper prepared in 1950, soon after the Chinese Communist party came to power, it referred simply to the islands by their Japanese name as “part of Okinawa.”17 Some doubt must remain on the status of this proposal until the actual document is published, but had it been implemented, and had Beijing actually been invited to San Francisco, such a stance might at least have informed the comprehensive discussions on territory that would have followed.

The question of Okinawa itself, raised by China in 2013 as still problematic and needing to be addressed in some arrangement between the two countries, was also seen as moot by US President Franklin Roosevelt. In 1943, he considered China’s claim to the Okinawan islands as a whole so strong that he twice asked Chinese president Chiang Kai-shek whether he would like to take possession of them in the eventual post-war settlement.18 Chiang, in a decision he is said to have later deeply regretted, declined.

In administering the Ryukyus from 1951 to 72, the US also assumed control of seas that included the Senkakus.19 However, in the negotiations over Okinawan reversion (1969-1972) it drew a line between the different sectors, transferring to Japan sovereignty over Ryukyu but only administrative control over Senkaku. Sovereignty was left unresolved, in implicit admission that the islands might be subject to competing claims. The United States has held strictly to that position to this day.

Why then, did the US split Senkaku from Ryukyu in 1972? Hara Kimie, Toyoshita Narahiko, and others, attribute the decision to Machiavellian US design. They believe it was explicit and deliberate. According to Hara, the US understood that the islands would function as a “wedge of containment” of China and that a “territorial dispute between Japan and China, especially over islands near Okinawa, would render the US military presence in Okinawa more acceptable to Japan.”20 According to Toyoshita, the US took a deliberately “vague” (*aimai*) attitude over territorial boundaries,21 sowing the seeds or sparks (*hidane*) of territorial conflict between China and Japan, and thereby ensuring Japan’s long-term dependence on the US and justifying the US base presence.22 For both, the implication is clear: the Senkaku/Diaoyu problem of today is the consequence of a US policy decision. Though conscious intent is necessarily difficult to prove, their hypothesis certainly offers a plausible explanation for the US shift of position.

The vague and unresolved “wedge/spark” formula of Senkaku/Diaoyu ownership, by ensuring ongoing friction in the Japan-China relationship also served as one of a set of keys locking Japan in place as a client or US-dependent state.23

The Senkaku/Diaoyu “problem” as it came to be known arose in the context of simultaneous developments at this time: the US shift of its position (marked most dramatically by the Nixon-led rapprochement with China), the sudden realization on all sides, following an ECAFE report on its 1968 investigation, that island ownership rights might carry potentially valuable resource rights to a sector of the East China Sea believed to be “the last remaining, richest, as yet unexploited depository of oil and natural gas,” the lodging of claims to the Senkaku/Diaoyu group by both Japan on the one hand and ROC and PRC on the other; and the stirring of a significant international overseas Chinese movement to support the Chinese demand.24

**3. The Shelf, 1972-2010**

Subsequently, Japan and China paid attention to Senkaku/Diaoyu on two key occasions, in 1972 and 1978. When Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei raised the question to Chinese premier Zhou Enlai on the former occasion, Zhou replied that the matter should be shelved as opening it would complicate and delay the normalization process.25 Six years later, in Japan to negotiate a Peace and Friendship Treaty, Deng Xiaoping reiterated this “shelving” formula, preferring to leave it to “the next generation” to find sufficient wisdom to resolve it.26 For roughly 40 years a *modus vivendi* held: though occasional landings (by Chinese activists from a Hong Kong base and by Japanese rightists sailing from ports in Okinawa) took place, the two governments tacitly cooperated to prevent them.27

Today, the Japanese Foreign Ministry adopts the improbable position that there was no such “shelving” arrangement.28 While it seems clear there was no formal diplomatic document to such effect, however, the exchanges recorded above were not trivial. What seems likely is that both sides stated their respective positions but chose to avoid formal negotiations which might have delayed general settlement.29

One prominent Japanese scholar now accuses the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of “inexcusable and outrageous” behaviour in having altered the Minutes of the Tanaka-Zhou meeting of 1972 and “burned and destroyed” those of the Sonoda-Deng meeting of 1978 lest either yield evidence prejudicial to the official case of undisputed Japanese sovereignty.30 In light of the recent revelation of the trashing of a vast cache of Foreign Ministry materials on the eve of Freedom of Information rules being introduced in 2001, Yabuki’s allegation cannot simply be dismissed.31

In two decisive steps, however, in 2010 and 2012, Japan moved to ensure that the shelf never be put back.32 In 2010, the Democratic Party of Japan’s government arrested the Chinese captain of a fishing ship in waters off Senkaku, insisting that there was “no room for doubt” that the islands were an integral part of Japanese territory, that there was no territorial dispute or diplomatic issue, and the Chinese vessel was simply in breach of Japanese law (interfering with officials conducting their duties). The fierce Chinese response caused Japan to back down and release the captain without pressing charges,33 but Japanese resolve hardened and China appears to have concluded that Japan had determined to set aside the “shelving” agreement. Mutual antagonism deepened steadily thereafter.

From China’s viewpoint, it was striking that Japan concentrated its diplomatic effort not on resolving a bilateral dispute over borders but on widening it to a security matter involving the United States, attaching its highest priority to securing an assurance from the US government that the islands were subject to Article 5 of the US-Japan Security Treaty, the clause that authorizes the US to protect Japan in the case of an armed attack “in territories under the administration of Japan.” U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton accepted that position in October 2010,34 and in due course, under strong Japanese prompting, it was entered into the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2013 and approved by the Senate on 29 November 2012.35

That is to say the US continued to acknowledge the “administration of Japan over the Senkaku Islands” but took no position on the question of sovereignty.36 Although much was made of this, there was “nothing new” in it.37 It means that, while the United States had no view on which country should own the islands, or even what they should be called, it was ready to go to war to defend Japan’s claim to them. It is a position that Henry Kissinger (in April 1971) described as “nonsense.”38

As the confrontation intensified, the left-right political divide in Japan dissolved into an “all Japan” front, with a broad national consensus supporting the Japanese official story of its Senkaku rights, protesting China’s threat to Japan’s sovereign territory and insisting there was no dispute and that the security alliance with the US covered defence of the islands against any China challenge.

If September 2010 marked “shelf down,” in April 2012 it was as if the shelf supports were removed too. Tokyo Governor Ishihara Shintaro announced to a conservative American think-tank audience in Washington, D.C. that his city was negotiating to buy the three privately owned islets of Uotsuri, Kita Kojima and Minami Kojima,39 in order, he said, to clarify public, Japanese governmental jurisdiction and remove any possible challenge to their sovereignty by China or Taiwan. His announcement – coupled with his calculated abuse of China (or “Shina,” the insulting, wartime appellation Ishihara deliberately chose to employ) - stirred a diplomatic storm.

Ishihara’s Tokyo Metropolitan Government began distributing a poster featuring a photograph of the three islets that it was concerned with and the message calling for the “courage” to say, “Japan’s islands are Japan’s territory.”40 It also published an advertisement in the *Wall Street Journal* asking for US support for its island purchasing plan, pointedly noting that the islands were “of indispensable geostrategic importance to US force projection,”41 leaving no room for doubt as to the direction in which the United States should project its force.

The summer of 2012 in East Asia was hot. Rival groups of activists challenged each other with acts of bravado. Vessels under various flags and representing various claims over the islands made or attempted to make visits, ratcheting up tension.

On 7 July, 75th anniversary of Japan’s launch of all-out war on China, Prime Minister Noda adopted the Ishihara cause and declared the national government would buy and “nationalize” the islands. 42 Later that same month he declared his readiness to deploy the Self-Defence Forces to defend them, 43 and in September he formally purchased them (for 20.5 billion yen, or ca. $26 million) and “nationalized” them, 44 declaring to the UN General Assembly that the islands were “intrinsic Japanese territory,” over which there was no dispute and could be no negotiation.45

Protest demonstrations followed in Hong Kong and cities and towns across China – cars were overturned, Japanese restaurant windows smashed, Japanese goods trashed, and exchanges of tour groups, students, and businesses suspended.

**4. Abe - “Taking Back”**

Abe Shinzo campaigned for the December 2012 lower house election under the overall slogan of “taking back the country.” He pledged not to yield one millimetre of Japan’s “inherent” territory of Senkaku,46 a matter on which there was no dispute, no room for discussion or negotiation. He wrote:

“What is called for in the Senkaku vicinity is not negotiation but physical force incapable of being misunderstood.”47

Abe’s close friend, education minister Shimomura Hakubun, was equally forthright. He referred to Senkaku as having been “stolen away” (an odd formulation when effective control was plainly in Japan’s hands).

“Right now,” he went on, “Japan is not functioning as a nation. … The 67 years since the end of World War ll have been a history of Japan’s destruction. Now is our only chance to remake the country.”48

Shimomura, and presumably the Abe government, evidently believed that to stand up to and refuse to negotiate with China was to “remake” Japan. When former Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio challenged the government (while on a visit to Beijing), saying,

“But if you look at history, there is a dispute … If you keep saying, ‘There is no territorial dispute,’ you will never get an answer;”49

Abe’s Defense Minister, Onodera Itsunori, branded him a traitor (*kokuzoku*).50

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The intransigent language of Japanese governments in 2013 was reminiscent of 1937, when Japan’s then leader, Konoe Fumimaro ruled out negotiations with Chin’s Chiang Kai-shek in the fateful months leading to full-scale war with China, and when the national media was similarly self-righteous and dismissive of China’s “unreasonableness” and “provocation.” 51 To China it looked as though Japan was actively collaborating in construction of a militarized Maritime Great Wall of China to block its access to the Pacific Ocean. In April Diaoyu was for the first time declared a “core interest,” and in May the *People’s Daily* added that the status of Okinawa itself had to be negotiated.

However, the high-risk associated with the policies and initiatives declared by the new Abe government evidently alarmed Washington. When US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio at their meeting in Washington in January 2013 that there was indeed a dispute and that Japan should sit down with China to negotiate it,52 it was in effect a rebuke. Although Abe subsequently moderated his language and policy, when he visited Washington in late February 2013, he was given neither dinner nor even a joint press conference, having to satisfy himself with a perfunctory lunch with the president. Furthermore, the Joint Communique made no reference to what he most sought: US backing for the Japanese claim to sovereignty over Senkaku/Diaoyu.53 Instead it was devoted entirely to a single issue, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP, Washington’s primary agenda. By insisting that he “would not act rashly” over the dispute, Abe appeared to be striving to dampen fears that that was precisely how the White House suspected he might act.54 There was a plaintive note to the press conference at which he stood alone to declare the alliance strengthened. He was more at ease in front of the “Japan handlers” at the Center for Security and international Studies (CSIS) later that day declaring that “Japan is back,”55 by which he was understood to mean that its obedience to Washington directives on the construction of the new base at Henoko on Okinawa was unquestioned, the TPP accepted and base reorganization his greatest priority. Concern that Abe’s neo-nationalist and historical revisionist (rejecting “the narrative of imperial Japanese aggression and victimization of other Asians”) agenda might be “divisive” and “could hurt U.S. interests” spread in Washington (and throughout the US media).56

**5. Intrinsic National Territory ­**

The Japanese Senkaku claim rests on three fundamental assertions: that **the islands, though annexed in 1895 just after China’s defeat in war and three months prior to the Treaty of Shimonoseki by which Taiwan and other islands were specifically ceded to Japan, were not “war spoils,” (or “stolen territories” in the words of the 1943 Cairo Agreement) but *terra nullius*, territory un-owned and unclaimed by any other country; that the Japanese occupation had been unchallenged between the act of annexation in 1895 and the publication of the ECAFE report in 1968, for at least 70 years; and that the islands were in some almost metaphysical sense Japan’s intrinsic, inalienable territory, what it called *koyu no ryodo*, a fundamental sector of the Ryukyu Islands. What for one purpose was abandoned and un-owned becomes for another Japan’s absolute and inalienable territory.**

As to the first claim, based on *terra nullius*, such a claim is of dubious merit today, if only for the reason that it harkens back to the time when imperialist countries divided up the world at their will. It has in some cases, notably Australia, has been judicially overruled at the highest court level.57 It stretches credulity today to argue that the Japanese annexation was justified on the terra nullius principle and was therefore unrelated to the victory it had just seized over China in war and more broadly to the military and diplomatic advantage Japan enjoyed in the context of its rise and China’s decline as the wave of high imperialism washed across East Asia. From China’s viewpoint, a single line may be drawn from Ryukyu (1879), Senkaku (1895), Taiwan (1895), to Dongbei or “Manchuria” (1931). The *People’s Daily* in May 2013 drew precisely such a line.

The prefix “*koyu no ryodo*” (“intrinsic” or “inalienable” national territory), attaches now almost inevitably to any reference to “Senkaku Islands,” implying at least that they had long been “part” of the Ryukyu islands. Yet that is a dubious proposition since they were not part of Ryukyu’s “36 islands” in pre-modern times nor when the prefecture was established in 1879, but were tacked on to it 16 years later. It is also an ironic appellation for islands unknown in Japan till the late 19th century, then identified from British naval references, not declared Japanese till 1895 or named until 1900, for which neither name nor Japanese claim was revealed until 1952. Furthermore, what were annexed in 1895 were two islands, Uotsuri and Kuba. Two others were added in the leasehold arrangements established in 1896, and one more in 1921. When the Government of Japan “nationalized” the “Senkakus” in 2012, it acted in relation only to the three of them nominally in private hands. Two were excluded, including one that still remains in private hands. They are commonly known, even to the Japanese Coastguard, by their Chinese names, Huangwei and Chiwei, rather than their Japanese names, Kuba and Taisho, and have remained under uncontested US control – as a *bombing range* – since 1955 for Kuba and 1956 for Taisho with neither national nor metropolitan government in Japan ever complaining or seeking their return. Responding on behalf of the government in 2010 to a Diet question as to why no effort had been made to recover the islands, a spokesman said that the US side “had not indicated its intention to return them.” 58 In other words, Japan would not dream of seeking their return unless the US first indicated that it would be permissible to do so.

It means that, however outspoken and bold they may be to address China, and however adamant on Japan’s “inherent” ownership rights, courage deserts Japan’s leaders when facing the United States. Long-term US military occupations of what they claimed to be “intrinsic” territory simply do not matter. Whatever “*koyu*” means, it is not inconsistent with occupancy by another country, even if that other country should choose to bomb such islands to smithereens, so long as that “other country” is the United States.

The word “*koyu*” (Chinese: “*guyou*”) has no precise English translation and the concept is unknown in international law and foreign to discourse on national territory in much, if not most, of the world.59 The concept seems to have been invented in Japan around 1970, along with the term *Hoppo Ryodo* (Northern Territories) as part of the effort to reinforce linguistically Japan’s claim to what had been known as the Southern Kurile Islands.60 It was subsequently adopted to underline the Japanese claim to Takeshima (Dokdo) against South Korea, and then to the Senkaku islands (against China and Taiwan). However, in due course Japan’s rhetorical device to make its own case seem beyond dispute was adopted by all parties (including China and Korea), making the claims absolute and unnegotiable, and thereby obscuring one of the lessons of modern world history: that borders are rarely absolute or sacrosanct, as shown by the example of Germany sacrificing most of its Prussian heartland in 1945 but then emerging, reinforced, at the centre of Europe.

Furthermore, being a rhetorical rather than scientific term, the word “*koyu*” whose linguistic sense is “intrinsic” or “unequivocal,” in practice has been given an opposite meaning, territories that tended to be *marginal* and *inferior*, susceptible of being abandoned or traded away by the “mainland” if the interests of the “*koyu hondo*” (intrinsic mainland) core require it.61 Thus, Japan’s readiness (mentioned above) to trade the Miyako and Yaeyama island groups in 1880 as part of a frontier grand bargain. Likewise, too, when facing a survival crisis in the summer of 1945 the Japanese mission to sue for peace headed by Konoe Fumimaro (three times former Prime Minister), carried instructions issuing from the emperor himself to ensure the “preservation of the national polity” (i.e., the emperor-centred system), in which it was taken for granted that Japan would not only lose all its colonies but be reduced to “abandoning Okinawa, Ogasawara and Karafuto (Sakhalin) and having to be satisfied with a “*koyu hondo*” consisting just of the four islands of Honshu, Shikoku, Hokkaido and Kyushu.”62

The Miyako and the Yaeyama Islands could be traded away in 1880, and Okinawa itself could be sacrificed to protect the interests of “Japan proper” and save the national polity in 1945, showed that frontier territories, whether or not graced with the title of “intrinsic,” in fact ranked low in national policy. Nowhere ranked lower than Senkaku, the periphery of Japan’s periphery.

As to the second, there is a disingenuous quality to the Japanese position that China’s silence on the Japanese occupation of the islands until 1970 could be construed as consent. International law offered no system to which aggrieved colonial or semi-colonial countries could appeal and no such recourse was open to China - whether the Republic (whose capital moved from Nanjing to Taiwan in 1949) or the People’s Republic (from 1949) - until the time it was actually shown, when the withdrawal of US forces from Okinawa became imminent and focused attention on what was and what was not “Okinawa” and to whom it should be “returned.” Normalcy” with Japan was not accomplished for China until 1972, which also happened to be the year that the US returned administrative authority over the Senkakus to Japan. From then, the Chinese protest was plain.

**6. China’s claim**

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| [<http://japanfocus.org/data/0031.JPG>](http://japanfocus.org/data/0031.JPG)  **Tokyo Metropolitan Government Poster, 2012**  **“What is called for is the courage to declare that Japan’s islands are Japan’s territory”)** |

The Chinese claim (People’s Republic and Republic alike) to Diaoyu rests on history (the records of the Ming and Qing dynasties) and geography (the continental shelf and the deep gulf that sets the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands apart from the Ryukyu island chain). For both, the islands are an integral part of Taiwan’s territory and the fact that they were appropriated by Japan as part of the violent processes of the Sino-Japanese War, and should therefore have been returned to China under the Potsdam Agreement, is plain.

There are two further, increasingly important angles, rooted in contemporary geo-politics. One is the inequity in the hand China is bequeathed by its forbears because they did not establish a chain of island colonial and dependent territories like the other powers of the early modern and modern world and for that reason China gains virtually nothing from the huge distribution of global marine resources carried out under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) while the former colonial powers have been richly rewarded.

While global attention concentrates on the supposed grab for ocean and resources being carried out by China in the East and South China Seas, the far greater claims by the club of advanced countries, mostly former imperialist and colonial powers, have for the most part escaped attention. The great beneficiaries have been the US, UK, France, together with Australia, New Zealand and Russia, followed closely by Japan,63 whose claims as a maritime great power, with or without Senkaku/Diaoyu, grow rapidly in significance. Discoveries of methane hydrates, rare earths, and precious and industrial metals in significant quantities in its various ocean domains (including claimed but contested ones other than Senkaku/Diaoyu) make it a potential maritime superpower.64 In terms of ocean domains Japan ranks at No 9, controlling five times as great an ocean area as China, while China, at No. 31, ranks just between The Maldives and Somalia.65 China “played no part in the 19th and 20th century processes of dividing up the Pacific land territories and plays none now in dividing up its ocean.”66 The very fact that China is such a minor player in global terms in its claims on world oceans might reinforce its determination not to yield in the spaces, such as Senkaku/Diaoyu, where it does have a claim. As Peter Nolan notes (his reference here to South China Sea may be extended to East China Sea),

“The West’s preoccupation with Beijing’s involvement in the South China Sea contrasts sharply with the complete absence of discussion of the West’s vast exclusive economic zones in the region. The former imperial powers’ acquisition of control over vast marine territories and resources through UNCLOS has received negligible attention other than in specialist legal journals, yet it eclipses by some distance the area and resources that are in contention in the South China Sea.”67

Furthermore, the Chinese desire for “normalcy” as a global power, able to project its naval weight and to protect its maritime interests in the same way other powers take for granted, is seriously disadvantaged by lack of any undisputed access to the Pacific Ocean. From its perspective, the gateways to the Pacific lie in the north through the Soya Strait between Sakhalin and Hokkaido, Tsugaru Strait between Hokkaido and Honshu, and in the south through the Osumi Strait between Kagoshima and Tanegashima or the Miyako Strait between Okinawa (main) Island and Miyako Island. Further south lies the Bashi Channel between Taiwan and the Philippines. Japan resents the Chinese Navy’s passage through such passages, notably the Osumi and Miyako Straits, but from the Chinese viewpoint, the long chain of Japanese controlled islands looks like nothing so much as a maritime great wall, and the moves to militarize the sectors till now neglected (especially between Okinawa Island and Taiwan) stir rising Chinese concern.

The spectrum of thinking in Chinese society may be much less monolithic than commonly assumed. Although anti-Japan sentiment in China is undoubtedly subject to some manipulation by government, distrust of Japan rests on an accumulation of unresolved grievances from the more than a century of modern history, and it is likely to be even stronger at the popular than at the government level.68

In general, China and Taiwan are united in their stance on Senkaku/Diaoyu matters, but it is to be noted that a Japan-Taiwan fisheries agreement was concluded in 2013 (after 17 years of talks) under which Taiwanese fishermen would have right to fish in certain specified waters adjacent to Senkaku/Diaoyu, if not in near coastal waters. It may be seen as a smart Japanese diplomatic gesture to split Beijing and Taipei, and thus to ease the pressure from hostile confrontation on *all* its frontiers. It presumably mans that the Taiwan coastguard will no longer confront Japanese forces with hostile intent. The deal made no reference to territorial issues but Beijing objected, and whether it will hold remains to be seen.69

Kyoto University’s Inoue Kiyoshi made the point forty years ago that, “Even though the [Senkaku] islands were not wrested from China under a treaty, they were grabbed from it by stealth, without treaty or negotiations, taking advantage of victory in war.”70 It is a judgement confirmed in 2012 from the opposite end of the ideological spectrum by *The Economist*, which wrote: “Whatever the legality of Japan’s claim to the islands, its roots lie in brutal empire-building.” 71

**7. The Okinawan Perspective**

Okinawans are aware in the depths of their bones that contest over sovereignty, in their regional waters, threatens them. The more the national security agenda as defined in Tokyo and Washington advances, the more insecure they become. War for the defence of Senkaku would be a “re-run of the battle of the Second World war, with us, Okinawans, the victims,” as Hiyane Teruo of the University of the Ryukyus puts it.72

Okinawan Senkaku thinking is characterized by five things: the claim of a long and close connection; the agency of civil society rather than government; the orientation towards an inclusive and regional cooperative rather than exclusive solution; the opposition to militarization (Okinawans in 1945 learned the bitter lesson that armies do not defend people, and are therefore disinclined to believe in any defence of the Senkaku that rests on militarizing them and embedding them in hostile confrontation with China); and (by contrast with the rest of Japan) a long historical memory of friendly relations with China.

Some now talk of an Okinawa-centred “livelihood zone” or (a proposal originating in Taiwan) of a “Minjian East Asia Forum.” Proponents of such agendas avoid the language of “inherent territory” or exclusive claims to oil or gas resources, prefer instead to talk of community, open borders and priority to the local over the nation state. For them, “livelihood zone” replaces “*koyu no ryodo*.” Naturally, they oppose military interventions and force-based positions. They are the antithesis of the Tokyo-centred “inherent” (national) territory. They believe the focus on “sovereignty” has to be widened to open a perspective of “spheres of border interaction,” “substantive spheres for neighbouring countries,” and a Northeast Asian “demilitarized zone.”73

The challenge is especially critical for Okinawa because it has focused so much of its social energy over decades on the struggle against a militarization and base dependence, which the Japanese state and mainland media justify by reference to “China threat.” The Japanese national bureaucracy in Tokyo and its American patrons who pursue the agenda of Okinawan base reinforcement as part of military confrontation with China naturally hope that a sense of threatened “national” interest would serve to soften Okinawan opposition to the base agenda. The adoption of unanimous resolutions by the Okinawan Prefectural Assembly and the City Assemblies of Miyako and Ishigaki (geographically closest to Senkaku) affirming that the Senkaku islands did indeed “belong to Japan” and calling for Japan to be resolute (*kizentaru)* in defending them indicted that that “national security” considerations were indeed becoming important considerations in Okinawan base politics. When the *People’s Daily* in May 2013 suggested Okinawa’s status needed to be re-negotiated, the Okinawan people’s movement saw it as a blow, fearing that, whatever the Chinese intent, any such campaign would be bound to weaken their movement.74

**8. Conclusion**

Where the Japanese case for exclusive entitlement to the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands is strong on a strict reading of international law, China’s is strong on grounds of history and geography. Its insistence that the frame for thinking of the problem include not just an antiseptic “international law” but the record of colonialism, imperialism, and war also has a moral quality.

There are no tribunals to adjudicate on such conflicting claims and, despite the assumption that there has to be a “right” answer, international law is no set of abstract and transcendent principles but an evolving expression of global power relations, reflecting at any one time the interests of dominant global powers.75 None of the state parties (Japan, China, Taiwan) is likely to submit to any formula that holds the possibility of a zero outcome. So, even though there are no residents of these islands with rights to be protected and in that sense resolution should not be so difficult, and despite the large economic interests shared by China and Japan, recourse to international law arbitration is highly unlikely.

Forty-five years after ECAFE’s report that raised the prospect of an oil and gas bonanza, no resource has been confirmed. The surrounding waters may or may not be rich in hydrocarbons but, even if they are, for one party to exploit them in the face of hostility of the other would be risky in the extreme. And if, for example Japan were to successfully to extract some resource, to attempt then to transport it across the Ryukyu Trench to Japanese markets would also be forbiddingly difficult and expensive, rather like transporting Middle Eastern oil over the Himalayas to Japan, while transport from the edge of the continental shelf to markets in eastern China on the other hand would present little problem.76 Quite apart from political considerations, the immense technical difficulty and risk involved therefore makes the cooperation of multiple governments and financial groups highly desirable.

For Japan, Senkaku/Diaoyu becomes a key element in the definition of a role in the region and the world: a regional state concentrating on building a cooperative order or a US client state cooperating in building a structure of containment of China, even while fearful the US might one day shift its Asian core interest from Japan to China – the trauma of the Nixon shocks remaining deep in the Japanese consciousness. The US “Client State” is bold towards China and craven towards the United States. To be able to set aside the deception and sophistry over “inherent” territory and absence of dispute that has been allowed to swallow rational discussion of the Senkaku/Diaoyu issue would require nothing short of a “spiritual revolution.”77

The election in Japan late in 2012 of a government of “Shinto” believers in the uniqueness of emperor-centred Japan who were denialists of Nanjing and “Comfort Women” and proponents of a stronger Japan, with a fresh constitution to warrant greater military build-up, could scarcely fail to ring alarm bells in China, and for that matter throughout Asia.78 It also caused concern in Washington, as the Congressional Research Service in May spelled out.

Three general points may be made.

First, it is hard to imagine any advance on the current, increasingly militarized confrontation over Senkaku/Diaoyu unless and until Japan concedes that there is a dispute. The longer it resists doing so, the greater the loss of face it stands to suffer when eventually, likely under US pressure, it finds that it has to.

Second, the issue is not simply territorial but deeply rooted in history. Japanese tend to forget; Chinese are unable to forget. The “Senkaku” issue today carries a “blowback” quality of unassuaged Chinese suspicion over Japan’s long neglected or insufficiently resolved war responsibility, the high-level denials of Nanjing, the periodic right-wing attempts to sanitize history texts, the refusal to accept formal legal responsibility for the victims of the Asia-wide “Comfort Women” slavery system, the periodic visits by Prime Ministers (notably Koizumi, 2001-2006) and Diet Members to Yasukuni.79 In April 2013, Deputy PM Aso and 168 members of the Lower House participated in the spring rites at Yasukuni.

Third, Japanese elites and the mass media alike seem to have lost the capacity to appreciate the Chinese position or to achieve a self-critical awareness of their own. While projecting a picture of China as threatening and “other,” they pay minimal attention either to the circumstances surrounding the Chinese claim to the islands or to the reasons for the general suspicion of Japan. They take for granted that Japan “owns” the islands and blame it for the crisis over them, and they have no sense of responsibility for the trashing of the “freeze” agreements of 1972 and 1978 (whose existence, for the most part, they simply deny).80 Japan’s claim is rhetorical, ambiguous, manipulative, and hostile to compromise or negotiation, yet few doubt that the Japanese position is “fundamentally solid and quite tenable under existing international law.”81

However superficially intractable, however, the kind of regional, East China Sea way forward, alluded to earlier by Fukuda Yasuo, Hu Jintao, Hatoyama Yukio, and others, need not be so difficult and indeed could be fairly straightforward, at least in principle. Since the prospect of a resolution to the sovereignty question is minimal, best, therefore, to set it aside, to revert in effect to the “shelving” agreement of 1972-2010 but to combine that with active cooperation around and perhaps under the islands. Agreements for sharing resources, sharing responsibility for the protection of nature (with possible UN World Heritage status), and for shared policing and administration of the islands and their seas could be negotiated. Cooperative arrangements for fisheries and resource extraction had been put in place in parts of this sea before the crisis that erupted in 2010 froze most of its mechanisms, and could be reinstated and expanded. China scholar Yabuki makes a simple, radical proposal,

“For instance, there could be a ‘one island, two governments’ response to ‘Senkaku-Diaoyu,’ wherein Japan might administer the islands on odd days and China on even days. What is required is the creation of this type of a ‘new consensus’ based on shared administration, the maintenance of peace and order, and fair sharing of resources.”82

It is a formula unlikely to recommend itself to either side at this moment, but it, or something like it, may in fact be the only realistic way forward. Only such a perspective, relativizing the nation state and building a structure of cooperation around and across national borders, offers a prospect of resolving the Senkaku/Diaoyu problem, transcending the San Francisco system and signalling the birth of a *Pax Asia*.

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[Domains(andClaims)](http://japanfocus.org/-Gavan-McCormack/3821)

•Wani Yukio, [Barren Senkaku Nationalism and China-Japan Conflict](http://japanfocus.org/-Wani-Yukio/3792)

•Gavan McCormack, [Small Islands – Big Problem: Senkaku/Diaoyu and the Weight of History and Geography in China-Japan Relations](http://japanfocus.org/-Gavan-McCormack/3464)

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• Koji Taira, [The China-Japan Clash Over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands](http://japanfocus.org/-Koji-TAIRA/2119)

**Notes**

1 This is a slightly revised version of a paper first delivered as keynote address to “The China-Japan Dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands Symposium,” at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign on 19 April 2013, and presented subsequently during April–May 2013 at Cornell University, The School of Advanced and International Studies at Reischauer Institute in Washington D.C., Free University of Berlin, University of Vienna and the Free University of Tbilisi, Georgia. I am grateful for the comments and criticism received on these various occasions.

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**5** Sachiko Sakamaki, “[China’s Hu, Japan’s Hatoyama agree to extend thaw in relations](http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=amN_cwK8u4NU/),” Bloomberg, 22 September, 2009

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10 Uemura, op. cit., p. 89. See also Gavan McCormack and Satoko Oka Norimatsu, *Resistant Islands: Okinawa Confronts Japan and the United States*, Rowman and Littlefield, 2012, p. 5

11 Quoted in Utsumi Shozo, “Okinawa mushi, gyogyo kyotei de mo,” *Okinawa taimusu*, 17 May 2013,

12 See the [series](http://j.people.com.cn/94474/204188/8237309.html/) on Senkaku/Diaoyu published in *Renmin rihbao*, 8-10 May 2013, especially part 3, “*Ma-guan* joyaku to *Diaoyudao* mondai o ronjiru,” *Renmin rihbao* (Japanese edition), 10 May 2013.

13 See Ivy Lee and Fang Ming, “[Deconstructing Japan’s claim of sovereignty over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands](http://japanfocus.org/-fang-ming/3877/),” p. 7. The Asia-Pacific Journal - Japan Focus, 31 December 2012.

14 Lee and Ming, p. 7.

15 Hosaka Masayasu and Togo Kazuhiko, *Nihon no ryodo mondai*, Kakugawa shoten, 2012, p. 119.

16 Foreign Office, Japanese Government, *Minor Islands Adjacent to Japan Proper*, Part 2, *Ryukyu and other Islands*, March 1947, see discussion and cover photograph in Wada Haruki, *Ryodo mondai o do kaiketsu suru ka*, Heibonsha shinsho, 2012, pp. 201ff

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22 Toyoshita Narahiko, “Aete hidane nokosu Bei senryaku,” *Okinawa taimusu*, 12 August 2012.

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24 For my view of the problem as of this time, see Jon Halliday and Gavan McCormack, *Japanese Imperialism Today –Co-prosperity in Greater East Asia*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1973, pp. 62-67.

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26 See the documents reproduced at Lee and Ming, op. cit and discussion in Tabata Mitsunaga, “Ryoyuken mondai o meguru rekishiteki jujitsu,” *Sekai*, December 2012, pp. 104-113. Also McCormack and Norimatsu, *Resistant Islands,* pp. 216-7.

27 See Lee and Ming, p. 11.

28 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “[The Senkaku Islands](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/senkaku/pdfs/senkaku_en.pdf),” March 2013.

29 Tabata Mitsunaga, “Ryoyuken mondai o meguru rekishiteki jijitsu,” Sekai, December 2012, pp.104-113, at .pp. 107-8

30 Susumu Yabuki, “Interview: China-watcher Yabuki says Senkakus are a diplomatic mistake by Japan,” *Asahi shimbun*, 12 December 2012. Yabuki makes his strongest accusations in his subsequent interview: Yabuki Susumu, interviewed by Mark Selden, “China-Japan territorial conflicts and the US-Japan-China relations in historical and contemporary perspective,” The Asia-Pacific Journal – Japan Focus, 4 March 2013.

31 McCormack and Norimatsu, pp. 57-58.

32 There are those who now argue that it was China, first in 1992, then in 2008 and 2012, that pulled down the shelf. I am not persuaded, however, and the legal and administrative measures referred to did not lead in practice to any change in China’s policies. (See Togo Kazuhiko, “[The Senkakus Issue](http://nbrforums.nbr.org/foraui/message.aspx?LID=5&MID=43883/),” NBR Japan Forum, 15 April 2013.))

33 Details in McCormack and Norimatsu, pp. 211-214.

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38 Lee and Ming, p. 2

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41 “To the American people, from Tokyo, Japan,” *Wall Street Journal*, 27 July 2012. And see Kyodo, “Ad in Wall Street Journal seeks US support for Senkaku purchase plan,” *Japan Times*, 29 July 2012.

42 Kyodo, “Government to make bid for Senkakus,” *Japan Times*, 8 July 2012.

43 In the Diet on 26 July 2012. See Takahashi Kosuke, “[China, Japan stretch peace pacts,”](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Japan/NH07Dh01.html/) Asia Times Online, 7 August 2012.

44 Toyoshita, *Senkaku mondai to wa nani ka*, pp. 72-3.

45 Lee and Ming, pp. 4-5.

46 Meeting Deputy Secretary of State William Burns on 15 October, quoted in Tabata, p. 113,

47 「この問題に外交交渉の余地などありません。尖閣海域で求められているのは、交渉ではなく、誤解を恐れずにいえば物理的な力です」Abe Shinzo, “Atarashii kuni e,” *Bungei shunju*, January 2013, 124-133, at p. 130. China’s riposte came months later when Major-General Luo Yuan declared that it would depend for resolution of the Diaoyu problem on “the elevation of our comprehensive national strength,” to which end it would proceed with mobilizing its forces into Diaoyu waters, so that “when needed we can turn the three major fleets into a fist to draw out the [Japanese] blade.” (“[Viewpoint: National strength still to be raised to solve Diaoyu Islands issue](http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90786/8247941/),” China Military Online, 17 May 2013. )

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Secretary of State, Washington, DC, January 18, 2013. For Satoko Oka Norimatsu’s analysis of the media reporting of this meeting, see “[Kurinton Kishioda kaiken hodo: masumedia no aorini damasarenai yo ni](http://peacephilosophy.blogspot.com.au/),” Peace Philosophy, 20 January 2013,

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81 Togo Kazuhiko, “Japan’s territorial problem: the Northern Territories, Takeshima, and the Senkaku islands,” The National Bureau of Asian Research, Commentary, 8 May 2012. And see Togo and Kosaka, op. cit.

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**China Alters Its Strategy in Diplomatic Crisis With Japan**

**By** [**JANE PERLEZ**](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/p/jane_perlez/index.html)

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[**http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/09/20/world/asia/Territorial-Disputes-Involving-Japan.html?ref=asia**](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/09/20/world/asia/Territorial-Disputes-Involving-Japan.html?ref=asia)

BEIJING — After allowing anti-Japanese demonstrations that threatened to spin out of control, [China](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/china/index.html?inline=nyt-geo) has reined them in and turned instead to hard-edged diplomacy over disputed islands in the East China Sea to lessen any potential damage the conflict might have inflicted on the nation’s softening economy and a delicate leadership transition.

[[](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/09/20/world/asia/Territorial-Disputes-Involving-Japan.html?ref=asia)Graphic](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/09/20/world/asia/Territorial-Disputes-Involving-Japan.html?ref=asia)

[**Territorial Disputes Involving Japan**](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/09/20/world/asia/Territorial-Disputes-Involving-Japan.html?ref=asia)

With relations between the two Asian powers at a low point, China decided to go ahead with a scaled-back reception here on Thursday night to honor the 40th anniversary of the resumption of their diplomatic ties on Sept. 29, 1972. A member of the Politburo’s Standing Committee, Jia Qinglin, attended with several other Chinese officials.

But Beijing sent a not-so-subtle message to Tokyo by not granting clearance to the plane that would have brought in an important Japanese guest, the chairman of Toyota. Other Japanese attended the event, though, and at the United Nations in New York, the two sides met in private and sparred in public.

Around the disputed islands in the East China Sea, called the Diaoyu by the Chinese and the Senkaku by the Japanese, a large flotilla of Chinese patrol boats was being monitored Friday by about half of [Japan](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/japan/index.html?inline=nyt-geo)’s fleet of coast guard cutters, the Japanese newspaper Asahi Shimbun reported.

The protests in more than 80 cities, including in urban centers where Japanese car dealerships and electronics plants were damaged, suggested that the Chinese leadership approved the outpouring of nationalism in part as insulation against criticism of the party itself during the transition of power that formally is scheduled to take place at the 18th Communist Party Congress, now set to begin on Nov. 8. But the protests threatened to turn against the Chinese government itself, diplomats and analysts said.

Even though China has overtaken Japan as the biggest economy in Asia, Beijing’s handling of the dispute, precipitated by the Japanese government’s decision to buy three of the islands from their private Japanese owners, highlighted the interdependence of the Chinese and Japanese economies, and the limitations on what the leadership could allow.

Notions of punishing Tokyo economically for buying the islands, whose status was left unclear after [World War II](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/w/world_war_ii_/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier), are unrealistic, said Hu Shuli, editor in chief of Caixin Media and one of China’s chief economic journalists. So many Chinese workers are employed at Japanese-owned companies, she said, that any escalation of tensions leading to a boycott of Japanese goods could lead to huge job losses.

This would be disastrous in an already shaky Chinese economy, Ms. Hu wrote in the Chinese magazine Century Weekly.

At a time when overall foreign investment in China is shrinking, Japan’s investment in China rose by 16 percent last year, Ms. Hu noted. The Japan External Trade Organization reported $12.6 billion of Japanese investment in China last year, compared with $14.7 billion in the United States.

Not just China, but all of Asia, could face a serious economic downturn if Japanese investments in China were threatened, said Piao Guangji, a researcher at the China Academy of Social Sciences.

Exactly how the anti-Japanese protests were organized, and by whom, remained murky.

A rough chronology showed that immediately after the Japanese government announced it had bought the islands, protests began in Beijing and other cities. The protests then spread, reaching a peak on the anniversary of the Sept. 18, 1931, [Mukden Incident,](http://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/Mukden_incident) which led to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. After that, the protests were shut down.

It appeared that permission for the weeklong protests had been discussed at very high levels, said one foreign diplomat who had followed the events closely.

Analysts said the protests might have been used as a weapon by one party faction against another as part of the internal machinations over who would win positions on the Standing Committee, but precisely how those possibilities played out, if at all, was not clear.

Bold color photographs on the front pages of state-run newspapers, particularly of the protests outside the Japanese Embassy in Beijing, were evidence that senior leaders approved of the demonstrations, and suggested that, in some respects, they were even organized by the government, diplomats said.

Photographs of protests are rarely seen in the state-run news media, they noted. By running them, the government sent a message to the Chinese people that joining the demonstrations was acceptable, said a foreign diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity in keeping with protocol.

Municipal workers in Beijing who normally guard local neighborhoods were called by their superiors at 4 a.m. on the day of one of the protests, directed to board buses that took them to the protest site outside the Japanese Embassy and provided with box lunches, one of the workers said. Their job was to provide security, alongside the police.

As the demonstrations grew in intensity, there were increasing signs that they might get out of control. Several protesters in Beijing carried signs saying “Diaoyu belongs to China, Bo belongs to the people.” That was a reference to Bo Xilai, the disgraced former Communist Party boss of the western city of Chongqing, who had developed a populist following before he fell from power this year after his wife was accused of murdering a British business associate.

Those signs were quietly removed from the hands of the protesters by plainclothes security men stationed around the crowd, said a person who watched one of the protests outside the Japanese Embassy.

A few placards bearing portraits of the late Chinese leader Mao Zedong stood out among the Chinese flags carried by most of the demonstrators. A protester in the southern city of Shenzhen was heard on television shouting, “Down with Communism!”

The end of the protests, however, did not mean the end of the fury against Japan.

At a meeting in Beijing this month, Western academics were taken aback by the depth of hostility toward Japan among Chinese foreign policy experts.

There was talk of “conflict” to teach Japan a lesson, said John DeLury, an assistant professor at Yonsei University Graduate School of International Studies in Seoul, for making what the Chinese see as an unacceptable grab of territory that historically has belonged to them.

With the new leadership in Beijing set to assume full control soon, even as Japan may turn to a conservative Liberal Democratic government under the more hawkish Shinzo Abe in elections next year, a reduction in tensions looks remote, said Ren Xiao, a former Chinese diplomat who served at the Chinese Embassy in Tokyo.

“I think it will be less likely for the new Chinese leadership to make concessions,” said Mr. Ren, now a professor of international politics at Fudan University in Shanghai. “The same goes for a possible Liberal Democratic Party government in Japan. That’s why I am very worried about the Sino-Japanese relationship.”

## China and Japan

### Could Asia really go to war over these?

# The bickering over islands is a serious threat to the region’s peace and prosperity

Sep 22nd 2012 | from the print edition



THE countries of Asia do not exactly see the world in a grain of sand, but they have identified grave threats to the national interest in the tiny outcrops and shoals scattered off their coasts. The summer has seen a succession of maritime disputes involving China, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan and the Philippines. This week there were more anti-Japanese riots in cities across China because of a dispute over a group of uninhabited islands known to the Japanese as the Senkakus and to the Chinese as the Diaoyus. Toyota and Honda closed down their factories. Amid heated rhetoric on both sides, one Chinese newspaper has helpfully suggested skipping the pointless diplomacy and moving straight to the main course by serving up Japan with an atom bomb.

That, thank goodness, is grotesque hyperbole: the government in Beijing is belatedly trying to play down the dispute, aware of the economic interests in keeping the peace. Which all sounds very rational, until you consider history—especially the parallel between China’s rise and that of imperial Germany over a century ago. Back then nobody in Europe had an economic interest in conflict; but Germany felt that the world was too slow to accommodate its growing power, and crude, irrational passions like nationalism took hold. China is re-emerging after what it sees as 150 years of humiliation, surrounded by anxious neighbours, many of them allied to America. In that context, disputes about clumps of rock could become as significant as the assassination of an archduke.

**One mountain, two tigers**

Optimists point out that the latest scuffle is mainly a piece of political theatre—the product of elections in Japan and a leadership transition in China. The Senkakus row has boiled over now because the Japanese government is buying some of the islands from a private Japanese owner. The aim was to keep them out of the mischievous hands of Tokyo’s China-bashing governor, who wanted to buy them himself. China, though, was affronted. It strengthened its own claim and repeatedly sent patrol boats to encroach on Japanese waters. That bolstered the leadership’s image, just before Xi Jinping takes over.

More generally, argue the optimists, Asia is too busy making money to have time for making war. China is now Japan’s biggest trading partner. Chinese tourists flock to Tokyo to snap up bags and designer dresses on display in the shop windows on Omotesando. China is not interested in territorial expansion. Anyway, the Chinese government has enough problems at home: why would it look for trouble abroad?

Asia does indeed have reasons to keep relations good, and this latest squabble will probably die down, just as others have in the past. But each time an island row flares up, attitudes harden and trust erodes. Two years ago, when Japan arrested the skipper of a Chinese fishing boat for ramming a vessel just off the islands, it detected retaliation when China blocked the sale of rare earths essential to Japanese industry.

Growing nationalism in Asia, especially China, aggravates the threat (see [article](http://www.economist.com/node/21563301" \t "_self)). Whatever the legality of Japan’s claim to the islands, its roots lie in brutal empire-building. The media of all countries play on prejudice that has often been inculcated in schools. Having helped create nationalism and exploited it when it suited them, China’s leaders now face vitriolic criticism if they do not fight their country’s corner. A recent poll suggested that just over half of China’s citizens thought the next few years would see a “military dispute” with Japan.

The islands matter, therefore, less because of fishing, oil or gas than as counters in the high-stakes game for Asia’s future. Every incident, however small, risks setting a precedent. Japan, Vietnam and the Philippines fear that if they make concessions, China will sense weakness and prepare the next demand. China fears that if it fails to press its case, America and others will conclude that they are free to scheme against it.

**Co-operation and deterrence**

Asia’s inability to deal with the islands raises doubts about how it would cope with a genuine crisis, on the Korean peninsula, say, or across the Strait of Taiwan. China’s growing taste for throwing its weight around feeds deep-seated insecurities about the way it will behave as a dominant power. And the tendency for the slightest tiff to escalate into a full-blown row presents problems for America, which both aims to reassure China that it welcomes its rise, and also uses the threat of military force to guarantee that the Pacific is worthy of the name.

Some of the solutions will take a generation. Asian politicians have to start defanging the nationalist serpents they have nursed; honest textbooks would help a lot. For decades to come, China’s rise will be the main focus of American foreign policy. Barack Obama’s “pivot” towards Asia is a useful start in showing America’s commitment to its allies. But China needs reassuring that, rather than seeking to contain it as Britain did 19th-century Germany, America wants a responsible China to realise its potential as a world power. A crudely political WTO complaint will add to Chinese worries (see [article](http://www.economist.com/node/21563310" \t "_self)).

Given the tensions over the islands (and Asia’s irreconcilable versions of history), three immediate safeguards are needed. One is to limit the scope for mishaps to escalate into crises. A collision at sea would be less awkward if a code of conduct set out how vessels should behave and what to do after an accident. Governments would find it easier to work together in emergencies if they routinely worked together in regional bodies. Yet, Asia’s many talking shops lack clout because no country has been ready to cede authority to them.

A second safeguard is to rediscover ways to shelve disputes over sovereignty, without prejudice. The incoming President Xi should look at the success of his predecessor, Hu Jintao, who put the “Taiwan issue” to one side. With the Senkakus (which Taiwan also claims), both Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping were happy to leave sovereignty to a later generation to decide. That makes even more sense if the islands’ resources are worth something: even state-owned companies would hesitate to put their oil platforms at risk of a military strike. Once sovereignty claims have been shelved, countries can start to share out the resources—or better still, declare the islands and their waters a marine nature reserve.

But not everything can be solved by co-operation, and so the third safeguard is to bolster deterrence. With the Senkakus, America has been unambiguous: although it takes no position on sovereignty, they are administered by Japan and hence fall under its protection. This has enhanced stability, because America will use its diplomatic prestige to stop the dispute escalating and China knows it cannot invade. Mr Obama’s commitment to other Asian islands, however, is unclear.

The role of China is even more central. Its leaders insist that its growing power represents no threat to its neighbours. They also claim to understand history. A century ago in Europe, years of peace and globalisation tempted leaders into thinking that they could afford to play with nationalist fires without the risk of conflagration. After this summer, Mr Xi and his neighbours need to grasp how much damage the islands are in fact causing. Asia needs to escape from a descent into corrosive mistrust. What better way for China to show that it is sincere about its peaceful rise than to take the lead?

  
Chinese navy missile destroyer DDG-112 Harbin fires a shell during the Russia-China joint naval exercise in the Yellow Sea of the Pacific Ocean, April 26, 2012. (photo: Wu Dengfeng/Xinhua)

[o to original article](http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/175640/tomgram:_michael_klare,_the_next_war/)

# The Next War?

By Michael Klare, TomDispatch

22 January 13

http://readersupportednews.org/images/stories/alphabet/rsn-D.jpgon't look now, but conditions are deteriorating in the western Pacific. Things are turning ugly, with consequences that could prove deadly and spell catastrophe for the global economy.

In Washington, it is widely assumed that a showdown with Iran over its nuclear ambitions will be the first major crisis to [engulf](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/whitehouse/obama-picks-chuck-hagel-as-next-defense-secretary-setting-up-likely-confirmation-fight/2013/01/07/2dc9e916-58a4-11e2-b8b2-0d18a64c8dfa_print.html" \t "_blank) the next secretary of defense - whether it be former Senator Chuck Hagel, as President Obama desires, or someone else if he fails to win Senate confirmation. With few signs of an imminent breakthrough in talks aimed at peacefully resolving the Iranian nuclear issue, many analysts believe that military action - if not by Israel, than by the United States - could be on this year's agenda.

Lurking just behind the Iranian imbroglio, however, is a potential crisis of far greater magnitude, and potentially far more imminent than most of us imagine. China's determination to assert control over disputed islands in the potentially energy-rich waters of the East and South China Seas, in the face of stiffening resistance from Japan and the Philippines along with greater regional assertiveness by the United States, spells trouble not just regionally, but potentially globally.

**Islands, Islands, Everywhere**

The possibility of an Iranian crisis remains in the spotlight because of the obvious risk of disorder in the Greater Middle East and its threat to global oil production and [shipping](http://www.tomdispatch.com/blog/175496/tomgram%3A_michael_klare,_no_exit_in_the_persian_gulf/" \t "_blank). A crisis in the East or South China Seas (essentially, western extensions of the Pacific Ocean) would, however, pose a [greater peril](http://www.cfr.org/east-asia/armed-clash-south-china-sea/p27883" \t "_blank) because of the possibility of a U.S.-China military confrontation and the threat to Asian economic stability.

The United States is [bound by treaty](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/type,REGIONALREPORT,,,5089162c2,0.html" \t "_blank) to come to the assistance of Japan or the Philippines if either country is attacked by a third party, so any armed clash between Chinese and Japanese or Filipino forces could trigger American military intervention. With so much of the world's trade focused on Asia, and the American, Chinese, and Japanese economies tied so closely together in ways too essential to ignore, a clash of almost any sort in these vital waterways might paralyze international commerce and trigger a global recession (or worse).

All of this should be painfully obvious and so rule out such a possibility - and yet the likelihood of such a clash occurring has been on the rise in recent months, as China and its neighbors continue to [ratchet up](http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/north-east-asia/china/223-stirring-up-the-south-china-sea-i.aspx" \t "_blank) the bellicosity of their statements and bolster their military forces in the contested areas. Washington's continuing statements about its ongoing plans for a "pivot" to, or "rebalancing" of, its forces in the Pacific have only [fueled](http://thediplomat.com/2012/12/05/americas-pivot-has-no-clothes/" \t "_blank) Chinese intransigence and intensified a rising sense of crisis in the region. Leaders on all sides continue to affirm their country's inviolable rights to the contested islands and vow to use any means necessary to resist encroachment by rival claimants. In the meantime, China has [increased](http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/north-east-asia/china/223-stirring-up-the-south-china-sea-i.aspx" \t "_blank) the frequency and scale of its naval maneuvers in waters claimed by Japan, Vietnam, and the Philippines, further enflaming tensions in the region.

Ostensibly, these disputes revolve around the question of who owns a constellation of largely uninhabited atolls and islets claimed by a variety of nations. In the [East China Sea](http://www.eia.gov/countries/regions-topics.cfm?fips=ECS" \t "_blank), the islands in contention are called the Diaoyus by China and the Senkakus by Japan. At present, they are administered by Japan, but both countries claim sovereignty over them. In the [South China Sea](http://www.eia.gov/countries/regions-topics.cfm?fips=SCS" \t "_blank), several island groups are in contention, including the Spratly chain and the Paracel Islands (known in China as the Nansha and Xisha Islands, respectively). China claims all of these islets, while Vietnam claims some of the Spratlys and Paracels. Brunei, Malaysia, and the Philippines also claim some of the Spratlys.

Far more is, of course, at stake than just the ownership of a few uninhabited islets. The seabeds surrounding them are believed to sit atop [vast reserves](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/05/world/asia/china-vietnam-and-india-fight-over-energy-exploration-in-south-china-sea.html" \t "_blank) of oil and natural gas. Ownership of the islands would naturally confer ownership of the reserves - something all of these countries desperately desire. Powerful forces of nationalism are also at work: with rising popular fervor, the Chinese [believe](http://www.economist.com/node/21560893" \t "_blank) that the islands are part of their national territory and any other claims represent a direct assault on China's sovereign rights; the fact that Japan - China's brutal invader and occupier during World War II - is a rival claimant to some of them only adds a powerful tinge of victimhood to Chinese nationalism and intransigence on the issue. By the same token, the Japanese, Vietnamese, and Filipinos, already [feeling threatened](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/22/world/asia/dispute-over-islands-reflect-japanese-fear-of-chinas-rise.html" \t "_blank) by China's growing wealth and power, believe no less firmly that not bending on the island disputes is an essential expression of their nationhood.

Long ongoing, these disputes have escalated recently. In May 2011, for instance, the Vietnamese [reported](http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-06-09/vietnam-says-chinese-boat-harassed-survey-ship-china-disputes.html" \t "_blank) that Chinese warships were harassing oil-exploration vessels operated by the state-owned energy company PetroVietnam in the South China Sea. In two instances, Vietnamese authorities claimed, cables attached to underwater survey equipment were purposely slashed. In April 2012, armed Chinese marine surveillance ships [blocked](http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/standoff-south-china-sea" \t "_blank) efforts by Filipino vessels to inspect Chinese boats suspected of illegally fishing off Scarborough Shoal, an islet in the South China Sea claimed by both countries.

The East China Sea has similarly witnessed tense encounters of late. Last September, for example, Japanese authorities [arrested](http://www.cnn.com/2012/08/16/world/asia/china-japan-islands-arrests/index.html" \t "_blank) 14 Chinese citizens who had attempted to land on one of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands to press their country's claims, provoking widespread [anti-Japanese protests](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/19/world/asia/china-warns-japan-over-island-dispute.html" \t "_blank) across China and a series of naval show-of-force operations by both sides in the disputed waters.

Regional diplomacy, that classic way of settling disputes in a peaceful manner, has been under growing strain recently thanks to these maritime disputes and the accompanying military encounters. In July 2012, at the annual meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Asian leaders were [unable to agree](http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/southeastasia/view/1213369/1/.html" \t "_blank) on a final communiqué, no matter how anodyne - the first time that had happened in the organization's 46-year history. Reportedly, consensus on a final document was thwarted when Cambodia, a close ally of China's, refused to endorse compromise language on a proposed "code of conduct" for resolving disputes in the South China Sea. Two months later, when Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton visited Beijing in an attempt to promote negotiations on the disputes, she was [reviled](http://www.cnn.com/2012/09/04/world/asia/china-clinton-visit/index.html" \t "_blank) in the Chinese press, while officials there refused to cede any ground at all.

As 2012 ended and the New Year began, the situation only deteriorated. On December 1st, officials in Hainan Province, which administers the Chinese-claimed islands in the South China Sea, [announced](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/02/world/asia/alarm-as-china-issues-rules-for-disputed-sea.html" \t "_blank) a new policy for 2013: Chinese warships would now be empowered to stop, search, or simply repel foreign ships that entered the claimed waters and were suspected of conducting illegal activities ranging, assumedly, from fishing to oil drilling. This move coincided with an increase in the size and frequency of Chinese naval deployments in the disputed areas.

On December 13th, the Japanese military [scrambled](http://www.japantoday.com/category/national/view/japan-scrambles-jets-against-china-military-planes" \t "_blank) F-15 fighter jets when a Chinese marine surveillance plane flew into airspace near the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. Another worrisome incident occurred on January 8th, when four Chinese surveillance ships [entered](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/09/world/asia/japan-summons-chinas-envoy-after-ships-near-islands.html" \t "_blank) Japanese-controlled waters around those islands for 13 hours. Two days later, Japanese fighter jets were again scrambled when a Chinese surveillance plane returned to the islands. Chinese fighters then came in pursuit, the [first time](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/19/world/asia/china-japan-island-dispute-escalates-to-air.html" \t "_blank) supersonic jets from both sides flew over the disputed area. The Chinese clearly have little intention of backing down, having indicated that they will [increase](http://www.latimes.com/news/world/worldnow/la-fg-wn-japanese-chinese-islands-20130111,0,3191692.story" \t "_blank) their air and naval deployments in the area, just as the Japanese are doing.

**Powder Keg in the Pacific**

While war clouds gather in the Pacific sky, the question remains: Why, pray tell, is this happening now?

Several factors seem to be conspiring to heighten the risk of confrontation, including leadership changes in China and Japan, and a geopolitical reassessment by the United States.

In China, a new leadership team is placing renewed emphasis on military strength and on what might be called national assertiveness. At the 18th Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, held last November in Beijing, Xi Jinping was named both party head and chairman of the *[Central Military Commission](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Database/Leadership/index.htm" \t "_blank)*, making him, in effect, the nation's foremost civilian and military official. Since then, Xi has made several heavily publicized visits to assorted Chinese military units, all clearly intended to demonstrate the Communist Party's determination, under his leadership, to boost the capabilities and prestige of the country's army, navy, and air force. He has already linked this drive to his belief that his country should play a more vigorous and assertive role in the region and the world.

In a speech to soldiers in the city of Huizhou, for example, Xi [spoke of](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/15/world/asia/chinas-xi-jinping-acts-to-bolster-military.html" \t "_blank) his "dream" of national rejuvenation: "This dream can be said to be a dream of a strong nation; and for the military, it is the dream of a strong military." Significantly, he used the trip to visit the Haikou, a destroyer assigned to the fleet responsible for patrolling the disputed waters of the South China Sea. As he spoke, a Chinese surveillance plane entered disputed air space over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands in the East China Sea, prompting Japan to scramble those F-15 fighter jets.

In Japan, too, a new leadership team is placing renewed emphasis on military strength and national assertiveness. On December 16th, arch-nationalist Shinzo Abe returned to power as the nation's prime minister. Although he *[campaigned](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/27/world/asia/shinzo-abe-selected-as-japans-prime-minister.html" \t "_blank)* largely on economic issues, promising to revive the country's lagging economy, Abe has made no secret of his intent to bolster the Japanese military and assume a tougher stance on the East China Sea dispute.

In his first few weeks in office, Abe has already announced plans to [increase military spending](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/08/world/asia/with-eye-on-china-japan-weighs-raising-military-spending.html" \t "_blank) and review an official apology made by a former government official to women forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese military during World War II. These steps are sure to please Japan's rightists, but certain to inflame anti-Japanese sentiment in China, Korea, and other countries it once occupied.

Equally worrisome, Abe promptly [negotiated](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/11/world/asia/japan-and-philippines-to-bolster-maritime-cooperation.html" \t "_blank) an agreement with the Philippines for greater cooperation on enhanced "maritime security" in the western Pacific, a move intended to counter growing Chinese assertiveness in the region. Inevitably, this will spark a harsh Chinese response - and because the United States has mutual defense treaties with both countries, it will also increase the risk of U.S. involvement in future engagements at sea.

In the United States, senior officials are debating implementation of the "*[Pacific pivot](http://www.tomdispatch.com/archive/175476/michael_klare_a_new_cold_war_in_asia" \t "_blank)*" announced by President Obama in a *[speech](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament" \t "_blank)* before the Australian Parliament a little over a year ago. In it, he promised that additional U.S. forces would be deployed in the region, even if that meant cutbacks elsewhere. "My guidance is clear," he declared. "As we plan and budget for the future, we will allocate the resources necessary to maintain our strong military presence in this region." While Obama never quite said that his approach was intended to constrain the rise of China, few observers doubt that a *[policy of "containment"](http://www.alternet.org/world/how-us-pivot-towards-asia-exacerbating-tensions-china" \t "_blank)* has returned to the Pacific.

Indeed, the U.S. military has taken the first steps in this direction, announcing, for example, that by 2017 all three U.S. stealth planes, the F-22, F-35, and B-2, would be [deployed](http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2012/12/pentagon-preps-stealth-force/" \t "_blank) to bases relatively near China and that by 2020 [60%](http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-06-01/world/35459231_1_asia-pacific-secretary-leon-e-panetta-pacific-assets" \t "_blank) of U.S. naval forces will be stationed in the Pacific (compared to 50% today). However, the nation's budget woes have led many analysts to question whether the Pentagon is actually capable of fully implementing the military part of any Asian pivot strategy in a meaningful way. A study conducted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) at the behest of Congress, released last summer, [concluded](http://csis.org/publication/pacom-force-posture-review" \t "_blank) that the Department of Defense "has not adequately articulated the strategy behind its force posture planning [in the Asia-Pacific] nor aligned the strategy with resources in a way that reflects current budget realities."

This, in turn, has fueled a drive by military hawks to press the administration to spend more on Pacific-oriented forces and to play a more vigorous role in countering China's "bullying" behavior in the East and South China Seas. "[America's Asian allies] are waiting to see whether America will live up to its uncomfortable but necessary role as the true guarantor of stability in East Asia, or whether the region will again be dominated by belligerence and intimidation," former Secretary of the Navy and former Senator James Webb wrote in the Wall Street Journal. Although the administration has responded to such taunts by reaffirming its pledge to bolster its forces in the Pacific, this has failed to halt the calls for an even tougher posture by Washington. Obama has already been chided for failing to provide sufficient backing to Israel in its struggle with Iran over nuclear weapons, and it is safe to assume that he will face even greater pressure to assist America's allies in Asia were they to be threatened by Chinese forces.

Add these three developments together, and you have the makings of a powder keg - potentially at least as explosive and dangerous to the global economy as any confrontation with Iran. Right now, given the rising tensions, the first close encounter of the worst kind, in which, say, shots were unexpectedly fired and lives lost, or a ship or plane went down, might be the equivalent of lighting a fuse in a crowded, over-armed room. Such an incident could occur almost any time. The Japanese press has [reported](http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21569740-risks-clash-between-china-and-japan-are-risingand-consequences-could-be" \t "_blank) that government officials there are ready to authorize fighter pilots to fire warning shots ig Chinese aircraft penetrate the airspace over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. A Chinese general has said that such an act would count as the start of "actual combat." That the irrationality of such an event will be apparent to anyone who considers the deeply tangled economic relations among all these powers may prove no impediment to the situation - as at the beginning of World War I - simply spinning out of everyone's control.

Can such a crisis be averted? Yes, if the leaders of China, Japan, and the United States, the key countries involved, take steps to defuse the belligerent and ultra-nationalistic pronouncements now holding sway and begin talking with one another about practical steps to resolve the disputes. Similarly, an emotional and unexpected gesture - Prime Minister Abe, for instance, pulling a Nixon and paying a surprise goodwill visit to China - might carry the day and change the atmosphere. Should these minor disputes in the Pacific get out of hand, however, not just those directly involved but the whole planet will look with sadness and horror on the failure of everyone involved.

# WP

# China wages a quiet war of maps with its neighbors



VIETNAM NEWS AGENCY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES - This picture taken by Vietnam News Agency and released on June 14, 2011 shows Phan Vinh Island in the Spratly archipelago.

### By [William Wan](http://www.washingtonpost.com/william-wan/2011/03/02/ABlzvmP_page.html), Friday, February 15, 6:45 AM

BEIJING — Bitter maritime disputes between China and its neighbors have recently sent fighter jets scrambling, ignited violent protests, and seen angry fishermen thrown in jail. But beneath all the bellicose rhetoric and threatening posture, China also has been waging a quiet campaign, using ancient documents, academic research, maps and technical data to bolster its territorial claims.

The frenetic pace of such research — and the official appetite for it — comes after decades of relative quiet in the field and has focused heavily on the two hottest debates: China’s quarrel with six other nations over a potentially [oil-rich patch of the South China](http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2011-09-17/world/35275622_1_south-china-sea-rig-juancho-sabban) Sea and its [tense feud with Japan](http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-02-05/opinions/36757731_1_senkakus-diaoyu-islands-china-and-japan) over a small sprinkling of land called the Diaoyu Islands by the Chinese and the Senkaku Islands by the Japanese.

[lick Here to View Full Graphic Story](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/island-disputes-in-asia/2012/10/04/d3e7e17e-0e38-11e2-bd1a-b868e65d57eb_graphic.html)

INTERACTIVE: Island disputes in Asia

[lick Here to View Full Graphic Story](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/timeline-disputes-in-the-south-china-sea/2012/08/15/8eebe420-e6de-11e1-936a-b801f1abab19_graphic.html)

TIMELINE: Key moments in the territorial disputes and intermittent skirmishes in the South China Sea.

For some Chinese academics, the now-heavy demand for such work marks a near reversal of what they experienced early in their careers. In past decades, some say, territorial disputes were often considered too sensitive a topic because China was leery of disrupting its relations with its neighbors.

“The government always emphasized the stability of bilateral relationships in the past, so doing public research on the Diaoyu Islands, for example, was not practical,” said one Chinese professor. “You couldn’t write a thesis on it . . . there would be nowhere to publish such articles publicly.”

Even now, the topic remains sensitive. The professor spoke on the condition of anonymity because, he said, others have been punished in the past for speaking too openly on such matters.

But after an especially [bitter dust-up in 2010](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/09/20/AR2010092000130.html) between China and Japan, some Chinese scholars say, officials worried that the limited research had hurt China’s ability to make strong territorial claims, leaving it at a disadvantage with others, such as Japan, whose research community faced fewer constraints.

China’s attention to maps and other documents has intensified since — bringing with it spats of a new kind. The most recent began shortly after Christmas when a [Japanese publication posted](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/asia/china/AJ201212280079) what it claimed was a 1950 Chinese government document unearthed in China’s own archives calling the disputed islands by their Japanese name, implying that Beijing then regarded the islands as Japanese.

China’s embassy in Japan [sidestepped the question](http://japandailypress.com/china-disputes-its-own-paper-saying-senkakus-were-part-of-ryukyu-0220749) of the document’s authenticity, saying that “even if the document exists, it won’t change the consistent position of the Chinese government.” The embassy later dismissed the whole thing as a “Japanese attempt to support their wrong stance with an anonymous reference document.”

But just weeks afterward, with little explanation, China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs shut down access to a large portion of its archival documents. A staffer at the archive said last week that the closure was “due to an upgrading of the system” but was unable to say when the work would be complete.

**Bitter wrangling over small islands**

The bitter feud between China and Japan over a handful of rocky outcroppings may seem frivolous. But the fight carries great weight domestically for both countries — and huge [implications for the United States](http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-09-16/world/35494846_1_senkaku-islands-diaoyu-china-and-japan).

f the military bluster and threats continue, U.S. diplomats and experts fear, it could lead to a military miscalculation and, in the worst case, an actual war that could draw in the United States, as an treaty-bound ally of Japan.

China’s increasingly aggressive posture on such claims is driven by a heady mixture of nationalism and strategic and economic interests. In a sign of just how important such claims have become, it has been widely reported in foreign media — though not confirmed by the government — that China’s new top leader, Xi Jinping, was personally put in charge of a task force responsible for the Diaoyu Islands claim in September, shortly before he was formally named to lead the ruling Communist Party.

That same month, tensions shot up after Japan announced it was buying the disputed islands from private Japanese owners for nearly $30 million. [The move prompted riots in China,](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/chinese-government-both-encourages-and-reins-in-anti-japan-protests-analysts-say/2012/09/17/53144ff0-00d8-11e2-b260-32f4a8db9b7e_story.html) and trade between the two Asian powers suffered. Diplomatic relations sputtered. And Chinese and Japanese ships clashed on the seas, ramming and spraying each other with water cannons.

In the five months since, there has been a flurry of official interest in China’s documentary backing for its territorial claims.

Several seminars and conferences were convened by government-affiliated think tanks. At one high-profile gathering in Shanghai, scholars concluded with a five-point consensus “to pool together our wisdom” and “to safeguard the sovereignty of the Diaoyu Islands and to oppose Japan’s violation.”

China’s State Council issued a [5,200-word white paper](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2012-09/25/c_131872082.htm) that laid out, point by exhaustive point, China’s case.

This fall, key historical documents, atlases and journals were assembled into [an exhibit](http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90882/7951533.html) at China’s National Library. The library’s official statement included a sneering reference to the “sheer historical lie” of Japan’s claims, and the displays included records from imperial envoys stretching back to the Ming dynasty in the 1300s.

**Academic credibility**

Maps — ancient and modern — have been a particular area of focus, with the government’s scientific and academic subsidiaries pumping out atlases, three-dimensional graphs and sketches of both disputed areas. [New passports](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2012/11/26/heres-the-chinese-passport-map-thats-infuriating-much-of-asia/) were outfitted with maps that include a dotted area that pointedly marks China’s claimed portions [of the South China Sea](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/world/special/south-china-sea-timeline/index.html). Even [weather reports](http://cctv.weather.com.cn/detail.php?city=%E9%92%93%E9%B1%BC%E5%B2%9B&submit=%E6%9F%A5%E8%AF%A2) on state-run television have been amended to add forecasts for disputed areas.

Some international scholars, however, question how much credibility the recent burst of historical studies and technical data adds to China’s claims — especially given the fact that most think tanks and universities in China remain firmly in the grip of the Communist Party and its government.

“If you look at the academic documents and arguments, especially on the Chinese side, the conclusions across the board look like one unified piece of concrete,” said Jean-Pierre Cabestan, head of government and international studies at Hong Kong Baptist University. “It’s concerning on an academic level to talk to people without a shred of doubt affecting their mind. It suggests a lack of ability to seriously evaluate the other side’s arguments. The whole truth is often more complicated.”

Chinese scholars defend their work as sound, even as some are trying to build credibility by relying less on Chinese documents and instead finding foreign materials to support China’s claims.

“We are not lacking in domestic evidence,” said Li Guoqiang, an expert on disputed territories at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. “But it would be even more convincing to the international community if we can use the evidence of our opponents.”

Most acknowledge that their research alone isn’t likely to solve such intractable territorial disputes. But they argue that it does provide a safe arena for conflict in an era of mounting tensions. In this month’s latest, Japanese officials said a Chinese naval vessel had threatened a Japanese warship by locking a [weapons-guiding radar](http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-02-05/world/36753118_1_uninhabited-islands-senkaku-china-and-japan) on it.

With the way the region is heating up, even academics working to support China’s claims wonder where the conflict might ultimately lead.

“I worry about the Sino-Japanese relationship, especially this year,” said Zhou Yongsheng, an expert at China Foreign Affairs University in Beijing. “If [Japan] keeps following their current policies, the situation will deteriorate even worse. And China is very assertive to take countermeasures if necessary. It could get unpredictable and out of control.”

**NYT**

**China Claims Air Rights Over Disputed Islands**

**By CHRIS BUCKLEY**

**Published: November 23, 2013**

HONG KONG — The Chinese government on Saturday claimed the right to identify, monitor and possibly take military action against aircraft that enter a newly declared “air defense identification zone,” which covers sea and islands also claimed by Japan and threatens to escalate an already tense dispute over some of the maritime territory.

The move appeared to be another step in China’s efforts to intensify pressure on Japan over the Japanese-controlled islands in the East China Sea that are at the heart of the dispute.

The declaration, from a Ministry of National Defense spokesman, Col. Yang Yujun, accompanied the ministry’s [release of a map](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/HomePicture/2013-11/23/content_4476177.htm), geographic coordinates and [rules](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/TopNews/2013-11/23/content_4476138.htm) in Chinese and English that said “China’s armed forces will take defensive emergency measures to respond to aircraft that do not cooperate in identification or refuse to follow orders.”

“The objective is to defend national sovereignty and territorial and air security, as well as to maintain orderly aviation,” Colonel Yang said in comments issued on the ministry’s website.

Later Saturday, China’s air force said it had sent its first planes, including fighter jets, to enforce the rules. Soon afterward, Japan scrambled its own fighter jets, Reuters reported, citing Japan’s Defense Ministry. A ministry spokesman said two Chinese reconnaissance planes had flown within about 25 miles of what Japan considers its airspace, Reuters said.

The Chinese announcement followed months of increasing tension over the uninhabited islands as China appeared to be taking moves to establish its claim to them, including more frequent ship patrols in the area. Those patrols have led to cat-and-mouse games between Chinese and Japanese ships near the islands, known as the Senkaku in Japan and the Diaoyu in China.

But trying to control the airspace over the islands could prove particularly problematic. Japan considers that airspace its own and has scrambled fighter jets in the past to try to ensure that Chinese aircraft did not enter. As the potential for a miscalculation that leads to conflict has increased, the United States has become worried that as an ally of Japan, it could be dragged into any conflict with China.

Secretary of State John Kerry said the United States was “deeply concerned” about China’s announcement. “Escalatory action will only increase tensions in the region and create risks of an incident,” Mr. Kerry said in a statement. He urged China “to exercise caution and restraint.”

The Japanese Foreign Ministry said the government had lodged a “serious protest” with China. An official there, speaking on the condition of anonymity as is ministry practice, said the head of Asian affairs had called the Chinese Embassy in Tokyo on Saturday to warn that the move could escalate tensions and was “extremely dangerous as it could trigger unpredictable events.”

Colonel Yang said that the declaration of the air zone was not aimed at any particular country, and that it would not impede the freedom of commercial flight over the East China Sea. But his words left little doubt that the move could be used against the Japanese government and military aircraft.

The longstanding dispute between Beijing and Tokyo over the islands [flared last year](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/23/world/asia/islands-dispute-tests-resolve-of-china-and-japan.html), before Xi Jinping assumed leadership of the Chinese Communist Party in November. The spark was a decision by the Japanese government to buy some of the islands from a Japanese citizen. Japan said the move was to keep the islands out of the hands of a nationalist politician who might increase tensions, but China saw the purchase as Japan’s effort to strengthen its hold on the islands.

The new Chinese rules left unclear how frequently and thoroughly China intends to enforce them. But Chinese state-run news media widely reported the announcement, which could kindle public expectations that the government will take steps to back up its words.

Military experts have said that even if Japan and China seek to avoid outright confrontation over the islands, there is the risk that an unplanned episode could spiral into a wider military conflict.

**NYT**

**U.S. Flies B-52s Into China’s Expanded Air Defense Zone**

**By** [**THOM SHANKER**](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/s/thom_shanker/index.html)

**Published: November 26, 2013** [**45 Comments**](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/27/world/asia/us-flies-b-52s-into-chinas-expanded-air-defense-zone.html?hp#commentsContainer)

WASHINGTON — Two long-range American bombers have conducted what Pentagon officials described Tuesday as a routine training mission through international airspace recently claimed by China as its “air defense identification zone.”

The Chinese government said Saturday that it has the right to identify, monitor and possibly take military action against aircraft that enter the area, which includes sea and islands also claimed by Japan. The claim threatens to escalate an already tense dispute over some of the maritime territory.

American officials said the pair of B-52s carried out a mission that had been planned long in advance of the Chinese announcement last weekend, and that the United States military would continue to assert its right to fly through what it regards as international airspace.

Pentagon officials said the two bombers made a round-trip flight from Guam, passing through a zone that covers sea and islands that are the subject of a sovereignty dispute between Japan and China.

Officials said there had been no Chinese response to the bomber run.

The Obama administration has become increasingly worried by the tense standoff over the islands that could drag the United States into a conflict. By treaty, the United States is obligated to defend Japan if it is attacked.

The islands, called the Senkaku in Japan and the Diaoyu in China, are currently administered by the Japanese, who consider the airspace above the islands to be theirs as well.

On Tuesday, Josh Earnest, a deputy White House spokesman, reiterated the administration view that the Chinese announcement was “unnecessarily inflammatory” and has a “destabilizing impact on the region.”

Within hours of the Chinese announcement last weekend that it had declared what Beijing termed an “East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone,” Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel issued a statement expressing deep concern over the action.

“We view this development as a destabilizing attempt to alter the status quo in the region,” Mr. Hagel said. “This unilateral action increases the risk of misunderstanding and miscalculations.”

Mr. Hagel noted that “this announcement by the People’s Republic of China will not in any way change how the United States conducts military operations in the region.”

Pentagon officials said the training sortie by the two B-52s could be seen as underscoring that commitment to preserving traditional rules of international airspace.

Mr. Hagel’s statement said the United States had conveyed “concerns to China through diplomatic and military channels, and we are in close consultation with our allies and partners in the region, including Japan.”

His statement concluded by noting that the United States is “steadfast in our commitments to our allies and partners. The United States reaffirms its longstanding policy that Article V of the U.S.-Japan Mutual Defense Treaty applies to the Senkaku Islands.”

The move by China appeared to be another step in its efforts to intensify pressure on Japan over the Japanese-controlled islands in the East China Sea that are at the heart of the dispute.

The declaration, from a Ministry of National Defense spokesman, Col. Yang Yujun, accompanied the ministry’s [release of a map](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/HomePicture/2013-11/23/content_4476177.htm), geographic coordinates and [rules](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/TopNews/2013-11/23/content_4476138.htm) in Chinese and English that said “China’s armed forces will take defensive emergency measures to respond to aircraft that do not cooperate in identification or refuse to follow orders.”

“The objective is to defend national sovereignty and territorial and air security, as well as to maintain orderly aviation,” Colonel Yang said in comments issued on the ministry’s website.

After the announcement Saturday, several Japanese commercial airlines began filing flight plans to China, according to the Japanese government. On Tuesday, Japan’s Transportation Ministry asked them to stop, and a group representing the two largest Japanese airlines, Japan Airlines and All Nippon Airlines, issued a statement later Tuesday saying that it would heed the request.

The group, the Scheduled Airlines Association of Japan, said it had “determined that there was no concern about the safety of flights even if flight plans were not submitted to China.”

Japan’s foreign minister, Fumio Kishida, said the government was in close communication with the airlines.

“I believe it is important for the public and private sectors to cooperate in showing our firm resolve to China,” Mr. Kishida said.

# China Claims Air Rights Over Disputed Islands

###### By CHRIS BUCKLEY

###### Published: November 23, 2013

HONG KONG — The Chinese government on Saturday claimed the right to identify, monitor and possibly take military action against aircraft that enter a newly declared “air defense identification zone,” which covers sea and islands also claimed by Japan and threatens to escalate an already tense dispute over some of the maritime territory.

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Later Saturday, China’s air force said it had sent its first planes, including fighter jets, to enforce the rules. Soon afterward, Japan scrambled its own fighter jets, Reuters reported, citing Japan’s Defense Ministry. A ministry spokesman said two Chinese reconnaissance planes had flown within about 25 miles of what Japan considers its airspace, Reuters said.

The Chinese announcement followed months of increasing tension over the uninhabited islands as China appeared to be taking moves to establish its claim to them, including more frequent ship patrols in the area. Those patrols have led to cat-and-mouse games between Chinese and Japanese ships near the islands, known as the Senkaku in Japan and the Diaoyu in China.

But trying to control the airspace over the islands could prove particularly problematic. Japan considers that airspace its own and has scrambled fighter jets in the past to try to ensure that Chinese aircraft did not enter. As the potential for a miscalculation that leads to conflict has increased, the United States has become worried that as an ally of Japan, it could be dragged into any conflict with China.

Secretary of State John Kerry said the United States was “deeply concerned” about China’s announcement. “Escalatory action will only increase tensions in the region and create risks of an incident,” Mr. Kerry said in a statement. He urged China “to exercise caution and restraint.”

The Japanese Foreign Ministry said the government had lodged a “serious protest” with China. An official there, speaking on the condition of anonymity as is ministry practice, said the head of Asian affairs had called the Chinese Embassy in Tokyo on Saturday to warn that the move could escalate tensions and was “extremely dangerous as it could trigger unpredictable events.”

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The longstanding dispute between Beijing and Tokyo over the islands [flared last year](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/23/world/asia/islands-dispute-tests-resolve-of-china-and-japan.html), before Xi Jinping assumed leadership of the Chinese Communist Party in November. The spark was a decision by the Japanese government to buy some of the islands from a Japanese citizen. Japan said the move was to keep the islands out of the hands of a nationalist politician who might increase tensions, but China saw the purchase as Japan’s effort to strengthen its hold on the islands.

The new Chinese rules left unclear how frequently and thoroughly China intends to enforce them. But Chinese state-run news media widely reported the announcement, which could kindle public expectations that the government will take steps to back up its words.

Military experts have said that even if Japan and China seek to avoid outright confrontation over the islands, there is the risk that an unplanned episode could spiral into a wider military conflict.

###### Editorial

# China’s Coercive Play

###### By [THE EDITORIAL BOARD](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/opinion/editorialboard.html)

###### Published: November 25, 2013 [119 Comments](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/26/opinion/chinas-coercive-play.html?hp&rref=opinion#commentsContainer)

China’s decision to impose a new air defense zone over a wide swath of the East China Sea is at odds with its claim to want a peaceful resolution to territorial disputes over a group of islands there. The announcement is a highly provocative move that has increased tensions and could make direct conflict with Japan more likely.

On [Saturday](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/24/world/asia/china-warns-of-action-against-aircraft-over-disputed-seas.html), China declared the zone around the islands, called Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China, and asserted the right to require aircraft entering the space to identify themselves and possibly to take military action against those that do not. The uninhabited islands, some no more than piles of rocks, are administered by Japan but claimed by China and Taiwan.

For more than a year, China and Japan, the world’s second- and third-largest economies, have been increasingly confrontational over the issue. Japan’s hypernationalist government led by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has most often been the provocateur, but China has contributed to the instability by deploying Chinese coast guard ships and aircraft to the area to challenge Japan’s claims. The air defense zone goes even further in contesting Japan’s control by aggressively asserting China’s reach in the region. It significantly complicates efforts by the United States to develop a relationship with China under President Xi Jinping.

Asian airlines quickly fell in line and said they would inform China of their flight plans before entering the disputed airspace. But the unilateral power grab rightly angered Tokyo and Washington. On Saturday, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, as part of a rapid American response, made it clear that the announcement “will not in any way change how the United States conducts military operations in the region” and reaffirmed America’s treaty obligation to aid Japan if it were attacked. On Monday, Mr. Abe [vowed](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/26/world/asia/japan-answers-chinas-warnings-over-islands-airspace.html?ref=worl) to defend his nation’s airspace.

Given China’s unilateral decision, with its threat of possible military action, the United States needed to stand up for its ally Japan, for the principle of freedom of navigation of the seas and skies, and for other Asian nations that also have territorial disputes with China in the East China Sea and the South China Sea.

Although America recognizes Japan as the administrator of the islands, it takes no position on claims to the islands in general and has urged all claimants to peacefully resolve their disputes.

But Mr. Abe has pursued a disturbingly nationalistic foreign policy dominated by overheated words and an aggressive posture toward China that can be dangerous, for Japan and the United States. The Obama administration must find a way to defend Japan’s interest without emboldening the Abe government to take foolish risks that would increase tensions with China. Along with its predecessors, the administration has not always been clear or consistent in its messages and that needs to change.

But it is China’s behavior that is most disturbing right now, especially since officials have left open the possibility of more air defense zones in the future. The United States has urged China to exercise caution and restraint and should be increasingly active in helping the two nations find a path away from confrontation. It is unclear if China really intends to respond militarily to Japanese or other planes flying through the zone, but the chance of miscalculation or error grows as the dispute escalates.

China’s action casts a black cloud over Vice President Joseph Biden Jr.’s trip to China next month. It also raises new questions about what President Xi meant when he said earlier this year that he hoped to work out a “new type of great-power relationship” with President Obama.

NYT

# Japan Answers China’s Warnings Over Islands’ Airspace

###### By [MARTIN FACKLER](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/f/martin_fackler/index.html)

###### Published: November 25, 2013

TOKYO — Matching China’s stern language with warnings of his own, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan vowed on Monday to defend his nation’s airspace after China [declared an air defense zone](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/25/world/asia/japan-rejects-chinas-claim-to-air-rights-over-disputed-islands.html) over a disputed group of islands in the East China Sea.

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| http://graphics8.nytimes.com/images/misc/spacer.gif | The New York Times |

Speaking in Parliament, Mr. Abe called China’s move an unacceptable effort to change the status quo with threats of force. He described it as a dangerous ratcheting up of tensions in the standoff over the uninhabited islands, which are administered by Japan but also claimed by China.

“We are determined to defend our country’s air and sea space,” Mr. Abe said. “The measures by the Chinese side have no validity whatsoever for Japan.”

China and Japan have been locked in an escalating war of words and nerves over the islands for more than a year. China’s declaration on Saturday that it would identify and possibly take military action against aircraft flying near the islands follows a long period of frequent dispatches of Chinese coast guard ships and aircraft to the area to challenge Japan’s control.

Mr. Abe’s effort to draw a line in the sand reflects his promises to lead his nation in standing up to China, which has eclipsed Japan as Asia’s top economic power. Since [taking office in December](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/27/world/asia/shinzo-abe-selected-as-japans-prime-minister.html), Mr. Abe, an outspoken conservative, has raised defense spending for the first time in a decade, and has increased military ties with the United States.

Japan has repeatedly signaled to China since Saturday that it has no intention of yielding control of airspace over the islands, known as the Senkaku in Japan and the Diaoyu in China. On Monday, the Japanese vice foreign minister, Akitaka Saiki, summoned China’s ambassador to Japan, Cheng Yonghua, to demand that China repeal the air defense zone, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Mr. Cheng replied that the Chinese air zone was not aimed at a specific country and would not affect civilian air traffic, according to Kyodo News. In Beijing, a Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman said that Japan had “no right to make irresponsible remarks,” because Japan has maintained a similar air defense zone over the islands, the state-run news agency Xinhua reported.

As the standoff has escalated, Japan has also sought to bind itself more closely to the United States, which has been the guarantor of Japanese security since the end of World War II. On Monday, the top Japanese government spokesman and chief cabinet secretary, Yoshihide Suga, said that Japan would work with the United States to urge China to allow aircraft to continue flying freely near the islands, which lie between Okinawa and Taiwan.

# NYT China Explains Handling of B-52 Flight as Tensions Escalate

###### By [JANE PERLEZ](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/p/jane_perlez/index.html)

###### Published: November 27, 2013

BEIJING — Responding to the flight of two unarmed American B-52 bombers through China’s new air defense zone over the East China Sea, the Chinese government said Wednesday it had monitored the planes but had decided not to take action despite the American refusal to identify the aircraft.

At a briefing in Beijing, the Foreign Ministry said the quiet reaction to what was a clear test by the United States of the new zone was “in accordance” with the rules announced by the Chinese Defense Ministry. China’s response to foreign aircraft in the new zone would depend on “how big the threat” was, the spokesman said.

Japan’s main civilian airlines also disregarded the new defense zone Wednesday, flying through the airspace claimed by China without notifying the Beijing authorities.

Tensions in the region have escalated since Beijing published a map of a new “air defense identification zone” on Saturday that overlapped with an air defense zone of its archrival, Japan, increasing the possibility of an encounter between Japanese and Chinese aircraft and heightening the dispute over islands in the East China Sea that both countries claim.

The Chinese declaration brought the United States, a treaty ally of Japan, directly into the dispute when Washington dispatched the B-52 bombers to the area overnight Monday.

The abrupt declaration by China of its air defense zone unnerved Asian countries and was criticized by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan as a “dangerous attempt” to change the status quo in the East China Sea by coercion.

China said it would require foreign aircraft flying through the zone to identify themselves or face possible military interception. The Pentagon said the B-52 bombers, which took off from Guam, were on a long-planned exercise, but Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said that Washington had no intention of changing its procedures by notifying China of United States Air Force flights through the zone.

The Chinese Ministry of Defense, which released the coordinates of the new zone, said Wednesday that it had monitored the flight path of the two B-52 bombers and noted that they flew about 125 miles east of the Diaoyu Islands from 11 a.m. to 1:22 p.m. on Tuesday. The disputed islands in the East China Sea are known as the Diaoyu by China and as the Senkaku by Japan.

“China has the ability to implement effective management and control of the airspace,” the Defense Ministry said in a statement.

A senior Chinese analyst, Shi Yinhong, who sometimes advises the Chinese government, acknowledged that the new air zone had worsened the already poisonous relations between China and Japan and represented a test of wills between Washington and Beijing.

The Chinese action comes on the eve of a visit by Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. to China, Japan and South Korea, a trip that was supposed to be dominated by economic issues but that will now probably be consumed by the fallout from the new air defense zone.

The relations among the three Asian countries — including tensions between the United States’ two main allies in the region, Japan and South Korea — were fraught even before Mr. Biden’s arrival.

But most of all, Mr. Biden will now be faced with the reality of Beijing’s determination to show what kind of major power relationship it wants with the United States, namely one in which China is regarded as an equal.

“China is engaged with Japan in a very intense confrontation, and the situation is very bad,” said Mr. Shi, a professor of international relations at Renmin University in Beijing. “The risk of escalating to a major conflict is increased.”

But Mr. Shi defended the new air zone as an expression of China’s determination to be regarded as a great power.

“This is the first time since the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 that it has expanded its strategic space beyond offshore waters,” he said.

That expansion of China’s strategic area provoked the United States to fly the two B-52 bombers through the new air zone without warning Beijing, he said.

“That’s why Washington made such a harsh and firm reaction,” he said. “This represents America saying ‘no’ to China’s aspiration in the western Pacific.”

Mr. Shi said it was possible that President Xi Jinping, who has taken charge of China’s foreign policy in his first year in power and assumed a far more forceful posture than his predecessors, had underestimated the American reaction.

“I believe Xi and his associates must have predicted the substance of the American reaction, whether they underestimated the details, I’m not sure,” he said.

On Chinese social media, users unleashed a barrage of nationalist commentary, congratulating the government for a tough stand against Japan and warning that Beijing should live up to the promise of the new air defense zone in confronting Japan.

“If the Chinese military doesn’t do anything about aircraft that don’t obey the commands to identify themselves in the zone, it will face international ridicule,” wrote Ni Fangliu, a historian and investigative journalist with more than two million followers on his Tencent microblog.

The People’s Liberation Army Daily, the official newspaper of China’s military, said in a commentary published before the Chinese government acknowledged the B-52 flights that the zone required strong warning and defensive capabilities, otherwise its creation would be just “armchair strategy.”

Asked at the Foreign Ministry briefing whether China’s decision not to respond to the flight of the B-52 bombers rendered China a “paper tiger,” the spokesman, Qin Gang, deflected the question.

“The word paper tiger has its special meaning. You should look it up, about why Chairman Mao Zedong spoke of the phrase ‘paper tiger,'” he said. “Here, I would like to emphasize that the Chinese government has enough determination and capability to defend national sovereignty.”

South Korea, which has recently developed friendlier relations with China, said it could not accept the new defense zone. The coordinates announced by China overlap with South Korea’s air defense identification zone in some respects. Yoo Jeh-seung, the deputy defense minister for policy of South Korea, said Seoul would not recognize China’s declaration.

China, adding heft to its growing air and sea presence, dispatched its only aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, on Tuesday for a training exercise in the South China Sea on its first lengthy sea voyage. In order to reach the South China Sea, the Chinese news media said, the carrier might sail close to the Okinawa Islands of Japan.

###### Listening Post

# NYT

# Airspace Claim Forces Obama to Flesh Out China Strategy

###### By [MARK LANDLER](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/l/mark_landler/index.html)

###### Published: November 27, 2013 [9 Comments](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/28/world/asia/airspace-claim-forces-us-to-flesh-out-china-strategy.html?hp#postcomment)

WASHINGTON — While foreign-policy experts and risk analysts were riveted by the nuclear talks with Iran last weekend, the next major geopolitical crisis erupted a world away, over a clump of desolate islands in the choppy waters between Japan and China.

[Enlarge This Image](javascript:pop_me_up2('http://www.nytimes.com/imagepages/2013/11/28/world/28post.html','28post_html','width=720,height=563,scrollbars=yes,toolbars=no,resizable=yes'))

[](javascript:pop_me_up2('http://www.nytimes.com/imagepages/2013/11/28/world/28post.html','28post_html','width=720,height=563,scrollbars=yes,toolbars=no,resizable=yes'))

###### Stephen Crowley/The New York Times

President Obama and Chinese president, Xi Jinping, in Russsia in September.

###### Multimedia

[[](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/09/20/world/asia/Territorial-Disputes-Involving-Japan.html?ref=asia)Graphic](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/09/20/world/asia/Territorial-Disputes-Involving-Japan.html?ref=asia)

###### [Territorial Disputes Involving Japan](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/09/20/world/asia/Territorial-Disputes-Involving-Japan.html?ref=asia)

With the United States dispatching two B-52’s to reinforce its protest over China’s attempt to control the airspace over the islands, it served as a timely reminder that President Obama wants to turn America’s gaze eastward, away from the preoccupations of the Middle East.

Mr. Obama’s shift — once known as a pivot, now re-branded as a rebalance — has always seemed more rhetorical than real. But when Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. travels to China, Japan and South Korea next week, the administration will have another chance to flesh out the policy.

“What isn’t clear to me is whether they see this as a Japan-China problem that needs to be managed or as part of a longer-term test of wills with Beijing,” said Michael J. Green, an Asia adviser in the George W. Bush administration who is now at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

If it is the latter, Mr. Green said, the United States needs to project military power in the region, build up the defensive capacities of allies like Japan and the Philippines, and align the countries that ring China’s coastal waters to present a united front against Beijing’s aggression.

The trouble, he added, is that “the administration is very worried about appearing to contain China.”

The cause of all this trouble are the flyspeck Senkaku Islands, which Japan administers but that China, enticed that they may sit atop rich mineral reserves, now claims, calling them the Diaoyu Islands.

The dispute has mushroomed into a dangerous standoff between the world’s second- and third-largest economies — one that rekindles old resentments over the World War II conduct of imperial Japan and pits a conservative Japanese leader, Shinzo Abe, against a Chinese president, Xi Jinping, who is riding a nationalist tide in his country.

With so much at stake, Mr. Biden’s advisers say the dispute will intrude on every meeting he has in the region. That could come at a cost to an agenda that includes promoting a trans-Pacific trade deal and discussing how to deal with the nuclear threat in North Korea. Mr. Biden must also decide how to handle the bitter animosity between Mr. Abe and South Korea’s president, Park Geun-hye.

“There’s an emerging pattern of behavior that is unsettling to China’s neighbors,” a senior administration official said on Wednesday, previewing Mr. Biden’s message. At the same, he added, “The vice president of the United States is not traveling to Beijing to deliver a démarche,” a diplomatic term of art for a slap on the wrist.

The delicate balancing act in Mr. Obama’s Asia policy, between cooperating with and containing China, is evident in the administration’s mixed messages over the last two weeks. Speaking before Beijing’s latest provocation, the national security adviser, Susan E. Rice, said the United States was seeking “a new model of major power relations.”

“That means,” she said in her maiden speech on Asia, “managing inevitable competition while forging deeper cooperation on issues where our interests converge.”

Referring to the territorial disputes between China and its neighbors — which flare up not just with Japan in the East China Sea but in the South China Sea, with the Philippines and Vietnam — Ms. Rice urged “all parties to reject coercion and aggression and to pursue their claims in accordance with international law and norms.”

To some critics, that smacked of moral equivalence: the coercion and aggression has been overwhelmingly on the part of China against its smaller neighbors. But on Saturday, when Beijing announced an “air defense identification zone” over a wide swath of air space above the islands, the United States jumped off the fence.

Secretary of State John Kerry immediately condemned what he called an “escalatory action” by China and Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said the United States would not alter any military operations because of it, a promise he kept this week by dispatching the unarmed bombers from Guam on a routine mission off the coast of China.

Administration officials said it was important to push back against China’s dubious assertion of jurisdiction over international air space. The Chinese policy requires foreign planes flying through the zone to identify themselves and file a flight plan, even if they are not flying into Chinese air space.

The symbolism of B-52’s flying, with no advance warning, through China’s zone spares Mr. Biden from having to play the tough guy. But experts said he needed to leave no doubt in talks with President Xi that the United States thinks the Chinese move was ill-advised.

“It will have the Chinese scrambling aircraft time after time, especially if the Japanese play games with it,” said Kenneth G. Lieberthal, a China adviser during the Clinton administration.

Mr. Biden has cultivated an unusually personal relationship with Mr. Xi. The two traveled together in China and the United States, when Mr. Xi was vice president. That may make Mr. Biden more alert to the domestic political pressures the Chinese leader faces, as he embarks on risky economic reforms after a recent Communist Party congress.

“Chinese social media, official and semiofficial media are all playing up this dispute,” said Cheng Li, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. “The U.S. has failed to understand how much weight the sovereignty issue carries with Asian countries.”

The tensions are likely to increase. The Chinese Navy has put its only aircraft carrier out to sea, on a course toward the South China Sea. In the East China Sea, an American carrier group is joining Japanese warships for long-planned naval exercises.

With so much firepower in such hotly contested waters, experts said there was a real danger of miscalculation by either side. Mr. Biden, who will begin his trip in Tokyo, is expected to urge Mr. Abe to show restraint as well.

The good news for all concerned, China experts said, is that Mr. Xi is much less interested in military adventurism than in overhauling China’s economy. “The chances of a real war are still low,” Mr. Li said. “But sometimes incidents will push leaders into a corner.”

The Economist

# The East China Sea

### Regional turbulence

Nov 27th 2013, 17:55 by The Economist | BEIJING AND TOKYO

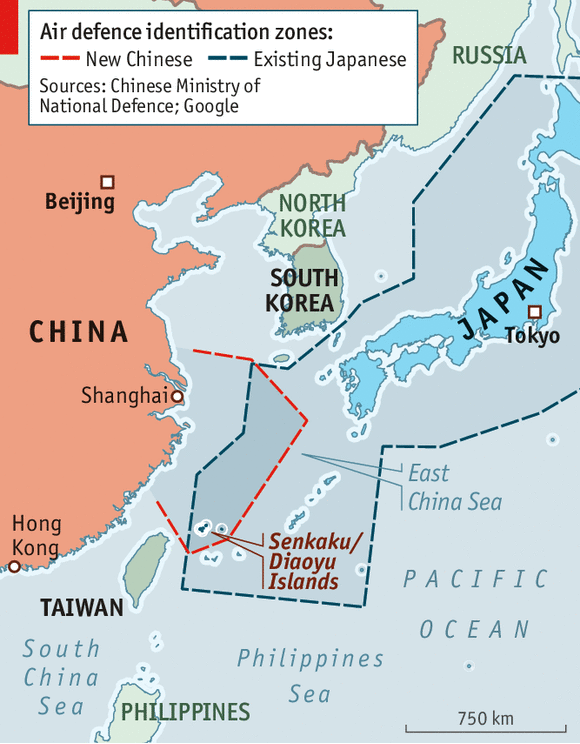


IT CAME out of a clear blue sky. On November 23rd China declared a huge swathe of the airspace above the East China Sea henceforth to be part of a new Chinese “Air Defence Identification Zone”, or ADIZ: all aircraft intending to enter the zone had to file flight plans with the Chinese authorities, maintain radio communications and follow whatever instructions Chinese controllers chose to issue. Otherwise, China warned ominously, they risked it taking “defensive emergency measures”.

Japan’s two main airlines, whose commercial flights traverse this newly designated area dozens of times a day, rushed to comply with the new rules. But then it was America’s turn to surprise, when the Pentagon let slip that two of its B-52 bombers had flown into the zone, over the Senkaku islands, on November 26th on what it claimed was part of regular exercises in the area. The planes had followed “normal procedures”, a spokesman said, which included “not filing flight plans, not radioing ahead and not registering our [radio] frequencies”. Suddenly, the prospect loomed of a stand-off between the world’s superpower and Asia’s emerging great power.

China insists it is doing nothing unusual in establishing an air-defence zone. America, Canada and Japan, among others, have had them since the early days of the cold war, when countries were anxious to defend themselves in good time against Soviet warplanes and nuclear missiles. Yet the United States, for one, only insists that aircraft identify themselves if they intend to enter American airspace; planes simply passing through the zone (which extends well beyond territorial limits) do not have to. China, on the other hand, insists that all aircraft in the new ADIZ abide by its new rules.

More provocatively, China’s ADIZ covers the uninhabited Senkaku islands, which China calls the Diaoyu. Japan has held these since the late 19th century, but since the 1970s they have been claimed by China. In September 2012 the Japanese government bought from their private owner three of the five islands it did not already own. China claimed the move was an anti-China conspiracy, and set out to undermine Japan’s control of the islands, first by using incursions of surveillance vessels, and later patrol aircraft, to which Japan’s Self-Defence Forces have responded by scrambling fighter jets. Recently, an unmanned Chinese drone flew over the islands. When Japan threatened to shoot down the next drone that came its way, a Chinese general insisted that would be an act of war.



The latest move represents a significant ratcheting-up of China’s challenge to Japanese control of the Senkakus. The new zone increases the risk of military escalation, accidental or otherwise. In future China may think that the zone forms the basis to take action against Japanese aircraft operating in the zone. Not only does the ADIZ cover Japanese-held territory, it also overlaps significantly with Japan’s own air-defence zone (see map). Meanwhile, running uncomfortably close to both Taiwan (which also claims the Senkakus) and South Korea, it has alarmed those neighbours too. An adviser to Shinzo Abe, the Japanese prime minister, calls it a “whole new game” and the biggest challenge in memory to freedom of movement in or above the East China Sea. Japan lodged a strong protest, which was rebuffed. Australia, South Korea and Taiwan have also expressed concerns. Chuck Hagel, America’s defence secretary, said China’s move was a “destabilising attempt to alter the status quo in the region”.

The decision to respond with an overflight of the B-52s, an official in Tokyo insists, was a joint understanding with Japan. China, meanwhile, says that it monitored the (unarmed) bombers, but claimed that they flew only along the “eastern edge” of its zone. The claim may be a way of saving face at home. Yet nothing suggests China is having second thoughts about its new ADIZ. Shi Yinhong of Renmin University in Beijing says it marks China’s first action since the Communist Party came to power in 1949 that “substantially expands its strategic space” on the western rim of the Pacific. Countries in South-East Asia with whom China has maritime disputes, notably the Philippines and Vietnam, wonder whether China will now impose an ADIZ over the South China Sea in a bid to turn it into a Chinese lake too.

For now, China’s move throws into question the depth of President Xi Jinping’s desire for a “new type of great power relationship” with America. Barack Obama seemed to get on well with Mr Xi when they met for a two-day personal summit in June, but he cannot have envisaged having to dispatch two bombers as a warning six months later. Some better sense of how the two countries intend to handle matters will come with a visit to China in early December by the vice-president, Joe Biden.

Mr Shi acknowledges that the zone has raised tensions, but predicts that Washington and Tokyo will badly want to avoid “too much risk of conflict”—ie, America and Japan will back off and accept the new situation. But that seems wishful thinking—as does a growing view among Chinese policymakers that fear of conflict with China will push America to weaken its long-held commitment to underwrite Japan’s security. In this view, America will push Japan into an accommodation with China, first, by acknowledging the existence of a territorial dispute.

Yet on the contrary, a more assertive America and Japan is now more likely. Bonnie Glaser of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think-tank, notes that flights such as the one taken by the B-52s this week are only the latest act in a long history of America’s proving the freedom of navigation in international skies and waters. (And it seems to have reassured the Japanese commercial airlines, which after lobbying by their government, announced that they would not be following Chinese rules in future.) In Tokyo, defence guidelines, to be released at the end of the year, appear likely to articulate a new policy of patrolling the seas and skies around the Senkaku islands around the clock, rather than intermittently, as now. The stakes have just got a whole lot higher.

NYT

# China Scrambles Jets for First Time in New Air Zone

###### By [JANE PERLEZ](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/p/jane_perlez/index.html)

###### Published: November 29, 2013 [218 Comments](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/30/world/asia/china-scrambles-jets-for-first-time-in-new-air-zone.html?hp&_r=0#commentsContainer)

BEIJING — China scrambled jets on Friday and identified two American surveillance planes and 10 Japanese aircraft in its newly declared air defense zone, the Chinese state news media said. The scrambling of the jets to find foreign aircraft was the first move announced by China showing that it was enforcing the zone, which it established last weekend.



###### The New York Times

###### Multimedia

[[](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/09/20/world/asia/Territorial-Disputes-Involving-Japan.html?ref=asia)Graphic](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/09/20/world/asia/Territorial-Disputes-Involving-Japan.html?ref=asia)

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[[](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/11/27/world/asia/overlapping-airspace-claims.html?ref=asia)Graphic](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/11/27/world/asia/overlapping-airspace-claims.html?ref=asia)

###### [Overlapping Airspace Claims in the East China Sea](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/11/27/world/asia/overlapping-airspace-claims.html?ref=asia)

Although there was no indication that China’s air force showed any hostile intent, the move ratcheted up tensions in a long-simmering dispute between Japan and China that could lead to a military miscalculation some fear could spiral out of control. The United States, which is bound by treaty to defend Japan if it is attacked, directly entered the fray this week by sending unarmed B-52s into the contested airspace, defying Chinese demands that all aircraft notify the Chinese that they were coming in advance or face possible military action.

The dispute between China and Japan centers on uninhabited islands in the East China Sea. The new air defense zone includes airspace above the islands. Analysts believe that China’s intent in declaring control was not to force a conflict, but to try to build a case that it has as much claim to the islands as Japan, which has long administered them.

But China may have miscalculated in making the move, experts say, perhaps not expecting such a strong pushback from the United States and Japan.

In Washington, administration officials confirmed that American planes had continued what they called routine training and surveillance flights in the disputed airspace. The officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, declined to provide specifics of the American flights on Friday, suggesting that they were classified reconnaissance missions.

The Chinese account in Xinhua, the state-run news agency, said the 10 Japanese aircraft included the F-15 jet fighter and surveillance aircraft, though it did not say how many planes of each type were used.

An American surveillance plane was involved in a major diplomatic incident between China and the United States in 2001 when it collided with a Chinese jet fighter over the South China Sea. The Chinese pilot was killed, and the American plane made an emergency landing on Hainan Island in southern China, an accident that badly damaged relations.

Although American officials acknowledged the risks of such accidents, they also said the Chinese air force in recent years has routinely sent its jets aloft to identify and occasionally shadow American military missions in Asian airspace.

On Friday, asked for clarification on China’s intentions regarding the new air zone, the spokesman at the Foreign Ministry, Qin Gang, said, “The Air Defense Identification Zone does not equal territorial airspace, and is not an expansion of a country’s territorial airspace.”

The spokesman also said, “Aircraft of all countries, including commercial aircraft, carrying out normal flight according to international law will not be affected.”

Many countries, including the United States and Japan, have air defense zones, but the coordinates of the Chinese zone overlap with parts of the Japanese zone, setting up what defense experts have called a dangerous situation in the airspace above the disputed islands.

Mr. Qin, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, brushed aside questions about Japanese criticism of China’s air defense identification zone, or A.D.I.Z.

“Would the Japanese side tell other countries, does it have an A.D.I.Z.?” Mr. Qin said. “Has it negotiated with other countries while it established and enlarged its A.D.I.Z.? How large is its A.D.I.Z.?”

An American expert on such zones said Japanese aircraft would not be deterred from flying in the airspace above the disputed islands, known as the Diaoyu in China and the Senkaku in Japan.

The expert, Peter Dutton, the director of the China Maritime Studies Institute at the Naval War College in Newport, R.I., said that because Japan regards the airspace above the islands as its own, the country would continue air patrols.

“Japan must continue to enforce its sovereignty or they could lose it to Chinese pressure,” Mr. Dutton said.

# NYT

# Airlines Urged by U.S. to Give Notice to China

###### By [PETER BAKER](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/b/peter_baker/index.html) and [JANE PERLEZ](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/p/jane_perlez/index.html)

###### Published: November 29, 2013 [259 Comments](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/30/world/asia/china-scrambles-jets-for-first-time-in-new-air-zone.html?hp&_r=0#commentsContainer)

WASHINGTON — Even as China scrambled fighter jets to enforce its newly declared air defense zone, the Obama administration said on Friday that it was advising American commercial airlines to comply with China’s demands to be notified in advance of flights through the area.



###### The New York Times

###### Multimedia

[[](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/09/20/world/asia/Territorial-Disputes-Involving-Japan.html?ref=asia)Graphic](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/09/20/world/asia/Territorial-Disputes-Involving-Japan.html?ref=asia)

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[[](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/11/27/world/asia/overlapping-airspace-claims.html?ref=asia)Graphic](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/11/27/world/asia/overlapping-airspace-claims.html?ref=asia)

###### [Overlapping Airspace Claims in the East China Sea](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/11/27/world/asia/overlapping-airspace-claims.html?ref=asia)

While the United States continued to defy China by sending military planes into the zone unannounced, administration officials said they had made the decision to urge civilian planes to adhere to Beijing’s new rules in part because they worried about an unintended confrontation.

Although the officials made clear that the administration rejects China’s unilateral declaration of control of the airspace over a large area of the East China Sea, the guidance to the airlines could be interpreted in the region as a concession in the battle of wills with China.

“The U.S. government generally expects that U.S. carriers operating internationally will operate consistent with” notice requirements “issued by foreign countries,” the State Department said in [a statement](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/11/218139.htm), adding that that “does not indicate U.S. government acceptance of China’s requirements.”

The decision contrasted with that of Japan’s government this week, when it asked several Japanese airlines, which were voluntarily following China’s rules, to stop, apparently out of fear that complying with the rules would add legitimacy to Chinese claims to islands that sit below the now contested airspace. China’s newly declared zone, experts say, is intended mainly to whittle away at Japan’s hold on the islands, which it has long administered.

On Saturday, a Japanese Foreign Ministry official said, “We will not comment on what other countries are doing with regard to filing flight plans.” It was not immediately clear if the Obama administration had notified Japan, a close ally, of its decision.

An official at Japan’s Transport Ministry said it had no immediate change to its advice to Japanese airlines.

The American decision drew criticism from some quarters. Stephen Yates, a former Asia adviser to Dick Cheney when he was vice president, said it was “a bad move” that would undercut allies in the region that take a different stance.

But Strobe Talbott, a former deputy secretary of state under Bill Clinton and now president of the Brookings Institution, said it was important to avoid an accident while drawing a firm line. “The principal option is to be extremely clear that disputes” over territory “must be resolved through diplomacy and not unilateral action,” he said.

American officials said they began having talks with airlines on Wednesday and characterized the guidance Friday as simply following established international air protocols independent of any political deliberations. The American announcement came on the same day that Chinese state news media said that China sent jets aloft and that they identified two American surveillance planes and 10 Japanese aircraft in the air defense zone the country declared last weekend.

Although there was no indication that China’s air force showed any hostile intent, the move raised tensions. The Chinese had also sent jets on patrol into the contested airspace the day before, but Xinhua, the state-run news agency, indicated that the planes on Friday were scrambled specifically to respond to foreign jets in the area.

Earlier in the week, the United States sent unarmed B-52s into the area, and they proceeded unimpeded. China then appeared to back down somewhat from its initial declaration that planes must file advance flight plans or face possible military action.

The administration’s decision on Friday underscored the delicate position President Obama finds himself in, drawn into a geopolitical dispute that will test how far he is willing to go to contain China’s rising regional ambitions.

China’s move thrust the United States into the middle of the already prickly territorial clash between Beijing and Tokyo, a position the administration had avoided for months even while reiterating that the mutual defense treaty with Japan covers the islands. After the Chinese declaration last weekend, American officials feared that, if left unchallenged, the Chinese action would lead to ever greater claims elsewhere in the Pacific region.

But with planes flying so fast and in such proximity, the administration’s worries grew that an accident or an unintended confrontation could spiral out of control. A midair collision between a Chinese fighter jet and an American spy plane off the coast of China in 2001 killed the fighter pilot and forced the spy plane to make an emergency landing on Hainan Island, setting off a diplomatic episode until Beijing released the American crew and sent the plane back, broken into parts.

“The challenge here, as with April 2001, is when you have an unexpected crisis, things escalate very, very quickly without any plans for de-escalation,” said Jon M. Huntsman Jr., Mr. Obama’s first ambassador to China. “That’s one of the big challenges we have in the U.S.-China relationship.”

One of the biggest challenges for Mr. Obama will be navigating the complicated personalities of leaders in Tokyo and Beijing. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, a strong nationalist, has vowed to stand firm against any Chinese encroachments, while President Xi Jinping of China has recently taken over as leader and has promised to advance a strong foreign policy meant to win his country more recognition as an international power.

The two countries have been at odds for years over the uninhabited islands known as Diaoyu by the Chinese and Senkaku by the Japanese. The United States does not take a position on the dispute.

Although administration officials believe China’s actions are mainly meant to give it an advantage in its struggle with Japan over the islands, experts on Asia say they also fit China’s larger goal of establishing itself as the dominant power in the region, displacing the United States.

Administration officials said they decided to proceed with routine military training and surveillance flights so as not to legitimize China’s assertion of control over the airspace or encourage it to establish a similar air zone over the South China Sea, where it has other territorial disputes. China had said it expected to set up other air defense zones, and experts said they expected one to cover that sea.

“We don’t want this to be the first in what would be a series of assertive moves,” said an administration official, who insisted on anonymity to discuss a delicate diplomatic matter. “The whole area’s fraught.”

Mr. Obama is sending Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. to the region next week, when he will meet with Mr. Xi and Mr. Abe as well as South Korea’s leader. Although the trip was previously scheduled, it will put Mr. Biden in the center of the dispute, and aides said he would deliver a message of caution to both sides to avoid escalation.

Many countries, including the United States and Japan, have air defense zones, but the coordinates of the Chinese zone overlap those of Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.

Peter Dutton, the director of the China Maritime Studies Institute at the United States Naval War College, said the new air zone also gives China a legal structure to intercept American surveillance flights in international airspace, which have long irritated Beijing. “It is clear that the Chinese do not seek regional stability on any level,” he said. “They intend to be disruptive in order to remake the Asian regional system in accordance with their preferences.”

###### News Analysis

# NYT

# In the East China Sea, a Far Bigger Test of Power Looms

###### By [DAVID E. SANGER](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/s/david_e_sanger/index.html)

###### Published: December 1, 2013

WASHINGTON — In an era when the Obama administration has been focused on new forms of conflict — as countries use cyberweapons and drones to extend their power — the dangerous contest suddenly erupting over a pile of rocks in the East China Sea seems almost a throwback to the Cold War.

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Suddenly, naval assets and air patrols are the currency of a shadow conflict between Washington and Beijing that the Obama administration increasingly fears could escalate and that American officials have said could derail their complex plan to manage [China](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/china/index.html?inline=nyt-geo)’s rise without overtly trying to contain it. As in the Cold War, [the immediate territorial dispute](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/28/world/asia/airspace-claim-forces-us-to-flesh-out-china-strategy.html) seems to be an excuse for a far larger question of who will exercise influence over a vast region.

The result is that, as [the Chinese grow more determined to assert their territorial claims](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/30/world/asia/china-scrambles-jets-for-first-time-in-new-air-zone.html) over a string of islands once important mainly to fishermen, America’s allies are also pouring military assets into the region — potentially escalating the once obscure dispute into a broader test of power in the Pacific.

Now a maritime outpost that had modest strategic significance is taking on enormous symbolic import. South Korea, which has broader concerns about China’s regional power, is building a new naval base for 20 warships, including submarines, arguing that it has to protect vital shipping lanes in the East China Sea for its exports — including many electronics headed to China.

The Japanese, after largely depending on American bases on Okinawa to back up their own limited patrols in the area, plan to build a new army base by 2016 on a small, inhabited island near the disputed islands, known as the Senkaku in [Japan](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/japan/index.html?inline=nyt-geo) and the Diaoyu in China.

The Japanese are also planning to deploy more F-15s and radar planes to Okinawa and a new helicopter carrier, and, for the first time, have considered buying unarmed American drones to patrol the area, part of a three-year-long shift in military strategy to focus on their southern islands and on China. That is part of a fundamental change in the national mind-set toward a Japan that is more willing and able to defend itself than anytime since World War II, in part because of doubts about America’s own commitment to the region.

As Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. left on Sunday for a trip that will take him to the capitals of all three major contestants — Tokyo, Seoul and Beijing — the administration’s public message is that all sides need to cool down and keep nationalistic talk from making a tense situation worse.

Mr. Biden will encounter countries that are now re-examining how civilian and military officials interact: Over the past few weeks, for very separate reasons, Japan and China have each approved the creation of a national security council. For Japan, it is an effort to strengthen the hand of the prime minister in times of crises, a concept the Japanese body politic long resisted because of the legacies of World War II.

For China, it appears to be an effort by President [Xi Jinping](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/x/xi_jinping/index.html?inline=nyt-per) to exercise a degree of control over all sources of national power that his immediate predecessor, Hu Jintao, never fully mastered. Interestingly, as China sent its aircraft carrier to another potential trouble spot, the South China Sea, its path avoided the disputed islands, perhaps a sign that the Chinese realize they may have overplayed their hand.

Still, in private, American officials say they are worried that a small incident — a collision like the one between an American intelligence plane and the Chinese air force a dozen years ago off Hainan Island — could rapidly worsen the situation.

On ABC’s “This Week” on Sunday, Tom Donilon, who was Mr. Obama’s national security adviser until earlier this year and a principal architect of the administration’s approach to China, said a similar “risk of miscalculation” is what “we need to be very concerned about going forward here.” A senior administration official said Mr. Biden’s message would be that the United States will “seek crisis management mechanisms and confidence-building measures to lower tensions and reduce risk of escalation or miscalculation.”

But one of Mr. Obama’s current advisers said, “It’s pretty clear this isn’t really about the islands.” Declining to speak on the record about a sensitive strategic issue, the official added that it was about a desire by some in China, including the People’s Liberation Army and perhaps the new political leadership, “to assert themselves in ways that until recently they didn’t have the military capability to make real.”

The adviser added: “They say it’s in response to our efforts to contain them, but our analysis is that it’s really their effort to push our presence further out into the Pacific.”

In fact, on his last trip to Asia as secretary of defense, Robert M. Gates said in January 2011 that he believed the long-term goal of the Chinese was to push the United States to “the second island chain,” farther out in the Pacific, keeping American air and naval assets ever farther from the region around China’s coast. Two years later, Obama officials will not utter that view in public, but it is a running theme in American intelligence assessments about the Chinese military, tempered by evidence that some Chinese officials worry about blowback if they overreach.

That has been a repeated cycle in Mr. Obama’s relations with the Chinese. In 2010, a series of episodes, touched off by American arms sales to Taiwan and the ramming of a Japanese coast guard ship in the Senkakus by an inebriated Chinese sea captain, led China to cut off military-to-military relations between Beijing and Washington and the sale of rare-earth metals, used for electronics, to the Japanese.

Both proved temporary, and by the end of the year some senior Chinese officials, led by the state councilor, Dai Bingguo, warned that China’s actions were driving countries in the region into American hands. “Some say China wants to replace the United States and dominate the world,” Mr. Dai wrote in an article that Mr. Donilon frequently cited. “That is simply a myth.”

But Mr. Dai is gone from power, and the Obama administration is now trying to figure out how to interpret each new Chinese action under Mr. Xi, of which the recent “air defense identification zone” was considered the most calculated and, perhaps, the most muscular. Many countries claim such zones; China knew it was claiming it over disputed territory.

Mr. Obama’s immediate response was to send two unarmed B-52 bombers on what the Pentagon called “routine” runs over the territory; they were routine, but the timing and symbolism were lost on no one. Now the White House faces the more complex task of its longer-term response. To make the promise of his “Asian pivot” real, the president will have to convince Congress, and allies in the region, that he means to devote more military, diplomatic and economic attention there — not to contain China, he insists, but to preserve and extend America’s longtime role as a keeper of the peace in the Pacific.

That will be challenging at a time of Pentagon budget cuts, a national mood to focus on problems at home and a national security apparatus focused on Iran, Syria and the future of the Middle East.

# NYT

# Biden Faces Delicate Two-Step in Asia Over East China Sea Dispute

###### By [MARK LANDLER](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/l/mark_landler/index.html) and [MARTIN FACKLER](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/f/martin_fackler/index.html)

###### Published: December 2, 2013

Tokyo — With Japan locked in a tense standoff with China over disputed airspace, Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. arrived here late Monday for a weeklong visit to Asia intended to reassure a close ally and demand answers from a potential adversary.

But first, Mr. Biden may need to repair a perceived disconnect between the United States and Japan in their responses to China’s [declaration of a restricted flight zone](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/24/world/asia/china-warns-of-action-against-aircraft-over-disputed-seas.html) over a swath of the East China Sea that includes disputed islands claimed by both Japan and China.

The Obama administration protested the “air defense identification zone” and [sent two unarmed B-52 bombers on a mission](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/27/world/asia/us-flies-b-52s-into-chinas-expanded-air-defense-zone.html) through the zone to underscore its displeasure. But as a safety precaution, [federal regulators advised American civilian flights to identify themselves](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/30/world/asia/china-scrambles-jets-for-first-time-in-new-air-zone.html) before entering the airspace, in compliance with the Chinese regulations.

That was viewed by some in Japan as a mixed message, since the Japanese government had told its airlines to ignore the Chinese demand. Japanese newspapers began worrying about “allies no longer walking in lock step,” and government officials sought clarification from Washington.

The State Department quickly said that the advice did not mean that the United States was recognizing China’s self-declared air-defense zone. And American officials have told the Japanese that the Federal Aviation Administration’s decision was a safety recommendation — far short of an order, though major American airlines said they were heeding it.

Still, a lingering ambiguity has led Japanese officials to give contradictory assessments of American intentions. On Sunday, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told reporters that his government had confirmed through “a diplomatic route” that the United States had not asked airlines to file flight plans with the Chinese.

“While having a deep discussion of the issues, we hope to respond with close coordination between Japan and the United States,” Mr. Abe said of his scheduled talks on Tuesday with Mr. Biden. The vice president did not comment after his arrival just before midnight.

Administration officials said earlier that Mr. Biden would leave no doubt in Japan or China that the United States views the Chinese move as a provocation and plans to disregard it, at least as far as military operations go.

“We have real concerns with this move by China because it raises real questions about their intentions,” said a senior administration official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to avoid pre-empting Mr. Biden’s message. “It constitutes a unilateral change to the status quo in the region, a region that is already fraught.”

Still, the official said, Mr. Biden would not deliver a formal diplomatic protest to Beijing, where he is to meet with President Xi Jinping on Wednesday. His aides are determined not to allow the matter to swallow up his trip, during which the vice president also hopes to build support for a trans-Pacific trade agreement and coordinate a response to the nuclear threat in North Korea.

Mr. Biden cultivated friendly ties with Mr. Xi when he was China’s vice president. But their encounter this time may be more difficult.

Analysts and former diplomats said the Chinese government was already using the recommendation to American airlines to pressure Japan. On Monday, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hong Lei, commended the American move as showing “a constructive attitude,” while scolding Japanese criticism of the air zone as “irresponsible.”

“The Chinese are already trying to portray this as daylight between the U.S. and Japanese positions, when there actually isn’t any,” said Kevin Maher, a former United States diplomat in Japan who is now a senior adviser at NMV Consulting in New York.

The tension with China comes at a delicate moment, with the United States pushing Japan to wrap up negotiations on the regional trade deal, the [Trans-Pacific Partnership](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/09/world/asia/asia-pacific-economic-cooperation-summit.html). For his part, Mr. Abe is expected to press Mr. Biden on the administration’s effort to win fast-track trade authority from Congress — the lack of which could stymie the deal.

Inspired by comments Mr. Abe made about the importance of women to the Japanese economy — and by the new American ambassador to Japan, Caroline Kennedy — Mr. Biden has left time for a visit to a Japanese company owned and run by a female entrepreneur. He will be joined by Ms. Kennedy, who took up her post in Tokyo three weeks ago.

For Mr. Biden, though, the region’s tensions will be inescapable. In addition to the conflict over the disputed islands — known in Japan as the Senkaku, and in China as the Daioyu — Japanese and South Korean leaders are feuding amid a resurgence of animosities that date to Japanese colonialism and World War II.

Mr. Abe, a conservative, has struck a nerve with statements about Japan’s culpability in the war. But since coming to office, [he has not visited the Yasukuni Shrine](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/18/world/asia/japans-leader-rejects-visit-to-war-shrine.html), a memorial to the Japanese war dead that has become a fraught symbol because it also honors people who are war criminals. Mr. Biden will likely encourage him to keep staying away.

With the United States trying to reinvigorate [President Obama’s shift to Asia](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/05/world/asia/with-obama-stuck-in-washington-china-leader-has-clear-path-at-asia-conferences.html) after he canceled a trip to the region because of the government shutdown, analysts will watch Mr. Biden’s words as a clue to America’s resolve to maintain its military presence here.

“It’s still early in their responses, so I hope the U.S. and Japan will work out how to coordinate better,” said Ichiro Fujisaki, who served as Japanese ambassador to the United States until last year. “The most important thing is for Vice President Biden to show that the U.S. will work on China to end its unilateral actions.”

NYT

# As Biden Visits, Chinese Push Back Over Air Zone

###### By [MARK LANDLER](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/l/mark_landler/index.html)

###### Published: December 4, 2013 [1 Comment](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/05/world/asia/biden-arrives-in-china-seeking-restraint-from-beijing.html?hp#postcomment)

BEIJING — Chinese leaders pushed back at visiting Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. on Wednesday over what they assert is their right to control a wide swath of airspace in the bitterly contested East China Sea. But the Chinese also indicated they had not decided how aggressively to enforce their so-called air defense identification zone, which has ignited tensions with Japan.

[Enlarge This Image](javascript:pop_me_up2('http://www.nytimes.com/imagepages/2013/12/05/world/asia/05biden-1.html','05biden_1_html','width=404,height=630,scrollbars=yes,toolbars=no,resizable=yes'))

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Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. arrived in Beijing from Tokyo on Wednesday.

###### Multimedia

[[](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/11/27/world/asia/overlapping-airspace-claims.html?ref=asia)Graphic](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/11/27/world/asia/overlapping-airspace-claims.html?ref=asia)

###### [Overlapping Airspace Claims in the East China Sea](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/11/27/world/asia/overlapping-airspace-claims.html?ref=asia)

###### [Interactive Map: Territorial Claims in South China Sea](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/05/31/world/asia/Territorial-Claims-in-South-China-Sea.html?ref=asia)

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Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Tokyo on Tuesday.

Shuttling from one feuding neighbor to the other, Mr. Biden arrived here from Tokyo to urge China’s president, Xi Jinping, to show restraint in the restricted zone, which Mr. Biden said the United States regarded as illegitimate and a provocation.

After 5½ hours of meetings, in which Mr. Biden laid out the American case against China’s action and Mr. Xi made a forceful counterargument, senior administration officials said, “President Xi took on board what the vice president said. It’s up to China, and we’ll see how things will unfold in the coming days and weeks.”

Mr. Xi’s response suggested China and Japan may be able to manage a standoff that had threatened to escalate dangerously, with China scrambling fighter jets to intercept Japanese airliners flying off the Chinese coast.

In brief public remarks midway through the meetings, Mr. Biden made no reference to the dispute, but said the relationship between the United States and China “ultimately has to be based on trust, and a positive notion about the motive of one another.”

Mr. Xi, who cultivated unusually personal ties to Mr. Biden when he was China’s vice president, sounded a more upbeat note about the broader relationship, though he conceded “regional hot-spot issues keep cropping up.”

He welcomed Mr. Biden as “my old friend” and said nothing directly about the air defense zone.

For Mr. Biden, however, China’s sudden action last month upended what was meant to be tour of Asia with a wide-ranging agenda. Instead, he has had to walk a fine line: defending an ally and rebuking a potential adversary, while preventing a spat over a clump of islands in the East China Sea from mushrooming into a wider conflict.

A day earlier in Tokyo, Mr. Biden condemned China’s action as an effort to “unilaterally change the status quo” and said it had raised “the risk of accidents and miscalculation.” He promised to raise those objections with Mr. Xi in Beijing.

Mr. Biden stopped short of calling on China to rescind the zone, something it is highly unlikely to do, given the nationalist sentiments that have been animated by its standoff with Japan. The United States military has ignored the zone, dispatching B-52 bombers last week to fly through it.

Shortly after Mr. Biden arrived, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said the new air defense identification zone was a fact of life that the world needed to accept.

The spokesman at the ministry, Hong Lei, described it as a “zone of cooperation, and not confrontation.”

Since the zone was announced on Nov. 23, 55 airlines from 19 countries had provided China with flight information, he said. The Federal Aviation Administration has advised civilian aircraft to comply with China’s request when flying into the airspace.

The F.A.A.'s guidance, which officials said was routine, unsettled Japanese officials, who had instructed their carriers not to identify themselves to the Chinese. But Mr. Biden’s strong words, combined with his appeal to China’s top leader, appears to have smoothed over that flap.

“The vice president seems to have put them back on track,” said Michael J. Green, an adviser on Asia in the George W. Bush administration. “Beijing may not like, and he probably did not want his trip to be all about this, but he had to send a strong message of dissuasion.”

Mr. Xi’s sanguine words were calculated to send a different message, according to China experts.

“A reason for Xi’s tone is a desire to make U.S. allies, especially Japan, uneasy about U.S. support by suggesting subliminally that the U.S.-China relationship is more important than other relationships, and the U.S. is keeping it sound despite China-Japan relations,” said Jeffrey A. Bader, a former China adviser to President Obama.

Mr. Xi, repeating a phrase he used at a meeting with Mr. Obama in Southern California last June, said China wanted to build a “new model of major-country relations,” based on respecting each other’s core interests, collaborating on global problems, and devising ways to “appropriately handle sensitive issues and differences between us.”

Mr. Biden, while embracing that formulation, said the relationship between China and the United States needed candor and trust. He said Mr. Xi had been candid in their previous meetings, and Mr. Biden’s aides said their exchanges were similarly uninhibited on Wednesday, ranging widely to include history and politics.

Another major area of focus, American officials said, was North Korea, which has entered another period of uncertainty with reports that a powerful uncle of the country’s supreme leader, Kim Jong-un, had been purged from his positions. Officials declined to say whether China had intelligence on the ouster of the uncle, Jang Song Thaek.

But they said Mr. Xi displayed renewed interest in pursuing a dual-track strategy of economic pressure and diplomacy to curb North Korea’s nuclear ambitions, prompted in part by the negotiations that recently led to an interim nuclear deal with Iran.

“They talked at some length about what the Iran example means for North Korea,” said a senior official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the contents of the meeting.

Mr. Biden, officials said, also quizzed Mr. Xi about the recent Communist Party Congress, which ratified far-reaching economic reforms, among them the liberalization of interest rates. The vice president, they said, pressed Mr. Xi to implement some reforms as quickly as possible, given that his most ambitious ideas will take years to put in place.

Before his meeting with Mr. Xi, Mr. Biden dropped in on the consular section of the American Embassy to promote its efforts to streamline the issuing of visas, particularly to students seeking to study in the United States. While there, he delivered a pitch to a line of people, many of them teenagers, waiting to submit applications.

“We’re constantly looking for bright, intelligent, innovative young people to come to America and stay in America,” Mr. Biden said. “I hope you learn that innovation can only occur where you can breathe free, challenge the government, challenge religious leaders.”

Mr. Biden’s audience applauded respectfully, though his words were less relevant to them, since the embassy only processes visas for temporary stays in the United States, not immigrant visas.

# NYT

# South Korea Announces Expansion of Its Air Defense Zone

###### By [CHOE SANG-HUN](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/c/choe_sanghun/index.html)

###### Published: December 8, 2013

SEOUL, South Korea — Defying both China and Japan, South Korea announced on Sunday that it was expanding its air patrol zone for the first time in 62 years to include airspace over the East China Sea that is also claimed by Beijing and Tokyo.

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Kim Min-seok, a spokesman for the South Korean Defense Ministry, at a news conference on Sunday.

South Korea’s expanded “air defense identification zone” was the latest sign of a broadening discord among the Northeast Asian neighbors, who are already locked in territorial and historical disputes.

With South Korea’s newly expanded zone, the air defense zones of all three countries now overlap over a submerged reef called Ieodo in South Korea and Suyan Rock in China. The reef is controlled by South Korea, which maintains a maritime research station there, but China also claims it. The seabed around the reef is believed to be rich in natural gas and minerals deposits.

The South Korean move came two weeks after China stoked regional tensions by unilaterally expanding its own air patrol zone to partly overlap with South Korea’s and include airspace over the reef. The expanded Chinese air control zone also covers a set of East China Sea islands, called Diaoyu in Chinese and Senkaku in Japanese, which are at the heart of a territorial feud between Japan and China.

The airspace disputes were a major topic when Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. visited Japan, China and South Korea last week.

With its announcement on Sunday, South Korea expanded its air defense zone more than 300 kilometers, or 186 miles, to the south. It said its new zone would take effect in a week. There was no immediate response from Beijing or Tokyo.

The expanded air defense zone follows the boundaries of South Korea’s existing “flight information region,” an area assigned to South Korea for civilian air traffic control under an agreement with the International Civil Aviation Organization. It will have no impact on civilian flights, said Kim Min-seok, a spokesman for the South Korean Defense Ministry.

But the announcement of the expanded zone raises the risk of an accidental military clash in the region. A military plane entering another country’s air defense identification zone must notify that country in advance. If it fails to do so, the country operating the zone may order it to leave, or dispatch military jets to confront the intruding aircraft.

Maj. Gen. Chang Hyok, a senior policy coordinator at the South Korean Defense Ministry, said Sunday that his government had explained its new air patrol zone to China and Japan. President Park Geun-hye also discussed it with Mr. Biden on Friday.

“Our top priority is to prevent accidental military clashes in the area,” General Chang said at a news briefing.

The State Department offered support for South Korea’s approach, saying that keeping open the lines of communication with China and Japan “avoids confusion for, or threats to, civilian airlines.”

“The United States has been and will remain in close consultation with our allies and partners in the region to ensure their actions contribute to greater stability, predictability, and consistency with international practices,” said Jen Psaki, a State Department spokeswoman.

When China declared its new air defense zone on Nov. 23 and demanded that planes flying in the area first notify Chinese authorities, both Japan and South Korea immediately rejected it. Their military aircraft have since flown through the disputed airspace without informing China.

The United States has also flown two B-52 long-range bombers through the contested airspace, a move seen as a warning by Washington that it would defy what it considered a provocative attempt by China to expand its control over airspace in the region.

South Korea’s air defense zone was first established in March 1951 by the United States Pacific Air Forces command, which wanted to guard against China, which had just joined the Korean War.

Until China expanded its air defense zone, the sky over the submerged reef of Ieodo was covered only by Japan’s air control zone. South Korea did not attempt to expand its air patrol zone over the reef, partly for fear that such a move might prompt Japan to claim the airspace over a disputed set of islets off the eastern coast of South Korea.

The South Korean-controlled islets, called Dokdo in Korea and Takeshima in Japan, are the source of another long-running territorial disagreement between the nations.

Under Ms. Park, South Korea has emphasized building what it calls a “strategic cooperative partnership” with China, by far its largest trading partner. It also recognizes the growing importance of Beijing’s role in international efforts to curb North Korea’s nuclear weapons program. Ms. Park has met President Xi Jinping of China twice, but the territorial and historical controversies rooted in Japan’s regional aggression in the early 20th century have kept her from meeting Japan’s prime minister, Shinzo Abe.

China’s attempt to police additional airspace over the East China Sea has highlighted a potentially volatile dispute between China and South Korea. The South Korean Navy is already building a $970 million base naval base in Jeju, an island off the southern coast of South Korea, to protect shipping lanes for South Korea’s oil-dependent, export-driven economy as well as to respond quickly to any dispute with China over the submerged reef.

**The Asia-Pacific Journal, Vol. 12, Issue 2, No. 3, January 13, 2014.**

### ****The Origins of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dispute between China, Taiwan and Japan****

**Yabuki Susumu with an introduction by Mark Selden**

This article introduces Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) documents and Okinawa Reversion Treaty Hearings on the Senkaku dispute to clarify Japanese, Chinese and United States positions on the historical origins and contemporary trajectory of the Senkaku/Diaoyu (hereafter, Senkaku) dispute.

**Introduction**

Yabuki Susumu, in a series of articles and talks, has rigorously mined the historical record of China (PRC/ROC)-Japan-US relations to illuminate the background to the dangerous conflict that presently threatens to bring war to the Western Pacific in the wake of Japanese nationalization of three of the Senkaku islands in September 2012. While other important issues add to the gravity of the conflict, including enlarged territorial claims by China, Japan and Korea in the form of advancing and defending competing claims to ADIZ in the East China and South China Seas, Yabuki shows the long trajectory of competing claims over the Senkaku dispute and the evolving policies of China, Japan and the United States in shaping it. Since so much of the international discussion of the issues has focused on China-Japan conflict, a particularly important contribution of the present paper is its clear presentation of US recognition at the highest levels of the significance of the competing territorial claims, and its maneuvering in negotiations with Taipei, Tokyo, and Beijing to shape the outcome.

The story can, of course, be traced back to earlier claims to the islands, including historical interactions involving Taiwan and Okinawan fishermen and Chinese tributary missions, to Japanese claims to the islands, and to their disposition by the US in framing and implementing the San Francisco Peace Treaty. The treaty set the stage for the transfer of the Senkaku to Japan in 1972 at the time of the reversion of administrative rights to Okinawa. But the story told here pivots on the detailed negotiations between Washington and Taipei in 1971 in the context of the US-China opening. What it shows is keen awareness of the Senkaku question by the ROC as early as 1970 in the context of US preparation for the reversion of Okinawa, and preoccupation with the issue by both Kissinger and Nixon in as they prepare the 1971 US-China opening at the time of Ping Pong Diplomacy and discussions of PRC resumption of the UN Security Council Seat. An ROC Note Verbale to the State Department of March 15, 1971 made the historical and contemporary case for Chinese possession of the Senkaku islands. Following close attention to its content, in the shadow of demonstrations over the islands on Taiwan, Kissinger handwrote in the margin, “But that is nonsense since it gives islands to Japan. How can we get a more neutral position?” The authoritative legal position of the US was given at the time of the Fulbright Hearings on reversion in the form of a memorandum of October 20, 1971 by Robert I Starr, Acting Assistant Legal Adviser for East Asian and Pacific affairs. Noting the dispute over the Senkaku between China and Japan, it noted that “The United States believes that a return of administrative rights over those islands to Japan, from which the rights were received, can in no way prejudice any underlying claims (of ROC and/or PRC).” It would remain for China and Japan to negotiate their disposition. At no time thereafter has the US legal position changed. MS

On September 11, 2013, the Japanese government decided to nationalize three islets of the Senkaku’s eight island group.

Table 1 Name of Senkaku/ Tiao-yu/Diao-Yu islands

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ownership1 | Japanese Name1 | Chinese Name2,  Taiwan | Square kilo-meters1 | Maximum Elevation3  meters |
| State 2012.9.11 | Uotsuri-jima(魚釣島) | Tiao-yu-t’ai(釣魚台)  Hoapin-san(和平山) | 3.6 | 383 |
| State 2012.9.11 | Minami-kojima(南小島) | Nan-hsiao(南小島) | 0.32 | 149 |
| State 2012.9.11 | Kita-kojima(北小島) | Pei-hsiao(北小島) | 0.26 | 135 |
| Private, Kobi Sho Gunnery Range 1972 | Kuba-jima(久場島) | Huang-wei-yu(黄尾嶼) | 0.87 | 117 |
| State, Sekibi Sho Gunnery Range 1972 | Taisho-jima(大正島) | Ch’ih-wei-yu(赤尾嶼) | 0.04 | 84 |
| State | Okino-kitaiwa(沖北岩) | Pei-hsiao(北礁) | 0.05 | 28 |
| State | Okino-minamiiwa(沖南岩) | Nan-hsiao(南礁) | 0.01 | 17 |
| State | Tobi-se(飛瀬) | no name | 0.02 | n. a. |

**Source: 1. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan,*Japan’s Basic Position on the Senkaku Islands and Facts,* October 2012.**

**2. Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate, *Okinawa Reversion Treaty, Annex to Hearings,*October 27, 28 and 29, 1971. p. 5.**

**3. Unryu Suganuma, *Sovereign Rights and Territorial Space in Sino-Japanese Relations*, University Hawaii Press, 2000.**

- See more at: http://japanfocus.org/-Mark-Selden/4061#sthash.En8TgFQJ.dpuf

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| **[<http://japanfocus.org/data/40611.jpg>](http://japanfocus.org/data/40611.jpg)**  **Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, Japan’s Basic Position on the Senkaku Islands and Facts, October 2012.** |

The Chinese government strongly protested the nationalization of the islets to the Japanese government, and on September 15 published a white paper on the “Diaoyutai Issue.”1 On September 18, on the anniversary of Japan’s seizure of Manchuria in 1931, Chinese in a number of cities demonstrated in a so-called “one million demonstration.” Some of the demonstrators destroyed shops and factories. Thus Japan-China relations deteriorated to the lowest point since normalization in September 1972.

On September 25, the United States published Senkaku (Diaoyu/Tiaoyutai) Islands Dispute: U.S. Treaty Obligations.***2*** On September 28, the Taiwan Government published a white paper titled, Riben Zhanju Diaoyu de Lishi Zhengju (Historical Evidence of Japanese Occupation of Tiaoyu).***3*** In October, the Foreign Ministry of Japan announced Senkaku-shotō no Ryōyūken ni tsuite no Kihon- Kenkai (English version: Basic Position on the Senkaku Islands and Facts), and asserted that ‘the Senkaku Islands are indisputably an inherent part of the territory of Japan in light of historical facts and based upon international law’.4

One year after the dispute erupted, the Beijing Olympic Committee voted in favor of Tokyo hosting the 2020 Olympics, and non-government level exchanges between both countries began to normalize. However, political relations remain frozen and show no signs of thawing.

Why did Japanese-China relations fall into this snare?

To answer this question, we must reconsider the Okinawa Reversion Treaty of some 40 years ago.

**SCENE One:**

**WHITE HOUSE MEETING of NIXON AND CHOW**

On April 12, 1971, Ambassador Chow who was leaving his position to return to Taipei as Foreign Minister visited the White House. Because of the visit of the U.S. Ping Pong Team to China, what was originally a courtesy call took on added significance. Shortly before Chow entered the room, Nixon and Kissinger discussed the visit of the U.S. ping pong team to the PRC. Nixon observed, “One interesting thing that we’re saying goodbye to him on the day that the ping pong team, waited, you know, ping pong team makes the front page of The New York Times.” Responded Kissinger, “They are very subtle though, these Chinese.” Nixon replied, “You think it means something.” Kissinger stated, “No question.”5

Ambassador Chow began the meeting by thanking the President for his many courtesies and saying he wanted the President to know that he always understood that the President and I [Kissinger] were the best friends of China in this Administration. The President said, “I want you to convey my warmest greetings to Generalissimo and Madam Chiang. We will stick by our treaty commitments to Taiwan; we will honor them. I said so in my State of the World Report.6

The Presidentcontinued, “On the UN membership issue, some of our friends have deserted us. We are prepared to fight for you but we want to do it in an effective way. I have many proposals on various schemes such as dual representation. I will make this decision, not the State Department. Some people say, let’s find a clever way of doing it, but there is no clever way of being defeated. There is no change in our basic position, but there may have to be some adaptation of our strategy. We, however, before we make a decision want to talk to you.

I am sending Ambassador Murphy to Taiwan; he is going there on business anyway, and the Generalissimo should talk to him as he talks to me. Taiwan and the UN is a fact of life for us and we will do nothing to give it up, but we have to be intelligent and we want to hear your views.”

Chow said, “We appreciate your special attention; above all, don’t spread the impression that all is lost.” The President then asked me to explain the choices on China representation, and I summed up the memorandum that I had written to him on the subject (copy attached).7

The President asked Chow for his analysis. Chow said, “We could stick them out for Universality plus the Important Question.” I [Kissinger] said, “Will the IQ carry and Universality lose?”

Chow said, “No, this depends on how it is formulated.” He then raised this issue of the Senkaku Islands.8

It has to do with the protection of the Chinese Nationalist interests. If Taiwan can do that, then intellectuals and overseas Chinese will feel they must go to the other side. The State Department statement insisting that this is part of Okinawa has had violent repercussions. This will get a movement of overseas Chinese.9

The President said, “I want you to know that the relaxation of trade that we are planning is mostly symbolic; the important issue is the UN. We will be very much influenced by what the Generalissimo will think. As long as I am here, you have a friend in the White House and you should do nothing to embarrass him. The Chinese should look at the subtleties. You help us and we will help you. I want Murphy to bring his report personally to me. We will stand firm as long as we can, but we must have an army behind us.10

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Because Ambassador Chow Shu-kai raised very important questions, Kissinger decided to meet him once more on the same day at 3:31–3:47 p.m.11

Dr. Kissinger said that he wanted to see Ambassador Chow briefly to express his personal sentiments on how much he had enjoyed having Ambassador Chow in Washington. He wanted, too, to repeat the sentiments which had been expressed earlier by the President on this same score.

Dr. Kissinger then referred to what the President had said concerning moves which the U.S. might possibly make toward Communist China, indicating that some steps might be taken this week. However, this had nothing to do with U.S. relations with the GRC, and quite frankly, were undertaken in order to prevent Russia from being the dominant country in dealing with Communist China. Ambassador Chow noted that he could understand this.12

Continuing, Dr. Kissinger saidthat we had picked a few steps which might be taken now, such as travel. While we could let a few Chinese Communists in, it was doubtful they would be breaking down our doors asking for visas. Ambassador Chow again noted that he could see our point—the new steps might make the Russians more amenable.

Nevertheless, he didn’t know if the Russians would respond to this approach, and Peking would be put in the middle between China, the U.S. and Moscow. Dr. Kissinger agreed that there were limits to what the Russians could do. This was a very complicated game.

Ambassador Chow described the U.S. approach as a highly sophisticated one, which couldn’t be explained very easily to the people on Taiwan. He would need to report to his President on this matter in generalized terms.

Dr. Kissinger pointed out that no one in Washington outside of a very few knew what was to be undertaken. In fact, a long list had been presented, of which we were taking but a few items. Ambassador Chow said that in the measures the U.S. was taking which affected his country, the understanding if not the support of the Chinese people was needed.

He described the strong sentiments which various Chinese groups had with regard to a number of issues, particularly the question of the status of Senkaku Islets. The demonstration which had taken place in Washington on April 10 was a case in point—those demonstrating had been scientists, engineers, and professional people and not just students.

The demonstration had come on all of a sudden because these people had become excited, and was symbolic of what they and the country would stand for. Ambassador Chow declared that he had been asked by President Chiang to take up the Senkaku question with the President and Dr. Kissinger.

Dr. Kissinger stated that he was looking into the Senkaku matter, and asked Mr. Holdridge to forward a report to him on the issues involved by April 13. Ambassador Chow, in commenting further on the Senkakus, remarked that even when the Japanese had occupied Taiwan and the Ryukyus, legal matters involving the Senkakus had been handled by courts on Taiwan, and the fishing boats which went to the Senkakus had been from Taiwan.

From the Japanese point of view, they didn’t care how the Senkakus were administered. For the Chinese though, the issue of nationalism was deeply involved.

Ambassador Chow referred to the fact that there would be some decisions required with respect to the General Assembly next year and he hoped that the “other side” (i.e., the Chinese Communists) could be kept out.

Whatever formula was advocated, the Chinese position had to be made tenable in the eyes of the people. Moreover, regardless of what was proposed, it would be hard to sell. Ambassador Chow went on to discuss the desirability of likeminded nations in East Asia working more closely together.

He described ASPAC13 as something of a social club of the foreign ministers, who put forward differing views on various subjects. The Koreans and the Japanese, for example, were quite far apart on many issues. His idea was for countries such as the ROC, Korea, Thailand and Vietnam to have more and closer consultations. This would not be like a “minor club,” but would have a real purpose in such things as military matters.

Such a grouping, having more or less of a joint stand, would make it easier for the U.S. to make military moves. The group could come to the U.S. and say that it would back the U.S. up. If the four governments could be gotten together, more planning could be undertaken on issues such as the UN, and a parallel approach maintained instead of each government going its separate way.

The U.S. would be expected to be a benevolent friend. It wouldn’t necessarily be expected to act, and the other nations would have to do things for themselves, but the tacit backing of the U.S. was needed. Rivalries had to be avoided, since there were already enough adversaries in the Communist and non-Communist worlds.

Dr. Kissinger remarked that in these days, anyone who stands up to the Communists comes under attack; this was not from the Communists but from fellow citizens. Ambassador Chowreferred to the existence of rumors that the U.S. was giving up, and of the need to arrest the trend of assuming that such was the case.

Dr. Kissinger said that he agreed. We did not believe that we had to demonstrate our wisdom and political sagacity by destroying our friends.

This was very much in the President’s mind. On the UN issue, we would send someone to the ROC to explain our position, and would need some support from the ROC side. Dr. Kissinger asked Ambassador Chowto explain to his President that our President was a true friend, and that there had to be understanding between the two.

AmbassadorChow stated that he would look upon his role in Taiwan as Foreign Minister as being one of support for the U.S. position. He considered himself very proud to have known Dr. Kissinger, whom he regarded as a friend.

He asked that Dr. Kissinger allow him the privilege of communicating directly with him. Dr. Kissinger replied that he definitely wanted Ambassador Chow to do so. If Ambassador Chow should write and let Dr. Kissinger know his private reactions, this would be a tremendous help. He wanted Ambassador Chow to know that in his opinion, he, Ambassador Chow, had always conducted his affairs here with dignity, and when in Taiwan should feel he had two friends in the White House.

If we were obliged to do things which caused them pain, this would be to the minimum extent possible. He assured Ambassador Chow that we would do nothing without checking with the ROC. As far as our moves toward the Chinese Communists were concerned, they were mainly of significance with respect to the USSR and in response to our own domestic situation.

Ambassador Chow said that he could see the U.S. point of view in both cases, although there were of course questions raised with respect to mainland China.

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The following day Kissinger asked Mr. John H. Holdridge of the National Security Council Staff to check ROC’s Note Verbale.14

John H. Holdridge’s memorandum reads as follows:

You asked for information on the Chinese claim to the Senkaku Islets. The most recent summary of this was contained in a Note Verbale sent the State Department by the Chinese Embassy on March 15.

Its main points are as follows:

—As early as the 15th century Chinese historical records considered the Senkakus as the boundary separating Taiwan from the independent kingdom of the Ryukyus.

—The geological structure of the Senkaku Islets is similar to that of other islets associated with Taiwan. The Senkakus are closer to Taiwan than to the Ryukyus and are separated from the Ryukyus by the Okinawa Trough at the end of the Continental Shelf, which is 2,000 meters in depth.

—Taiwanese fisherman have traditionally fished in the area of the Senkakus and called at these islets.

—The Japanese Government did not include the Senkakus in Okinawa Prefecture until after China’s cession of Taiwan and the Pescadores to Japan after the first Sino-Japanese war in 1895.

—For regional security considerations the GRC has hitherto not challenged the U.S. military occupation of the Senkakus under Article 3 of the San Francisco Peace Treaty. However, according to international law temporary military occupation of an area does not affect the ultimate determination of its sovereignty.

—In view of the expected termination of the U.S. occupation of the Ryukyu Islands in 1972, the U.S. is requested to respect the GRC’s sovereign rights over the Senkaku Islets and restore them to the GRC when this termination takes place.

John H. Holdridge’s Comment reads as follows:

As you can imagine, the Japanese Government has a comparable list of apparently offsetting arguments and maintains simply that the Senkakus remain Japanese. State’s position is that in occupying the Ryukyus and the Senkakus in 1945, and in proposing to return them to Japan in 1972, the U.S. passes no judgment as to conflicting claims over any portion of them, which should be settled directly by the parties concerned.

After reading this memorandum, Kissinger immediately handwrote the following comment in the margin: “But that is nonsense since it gives islands to Japan. How can we get a more neutral position?”

In the writers’ view, this is a very important conversation which decided the fate of the Senkaku/Diaoyutai problem. President Nixon and his aide Kissinger realized the complex nature of this dispute.

**SECOND SCENE:**

**TEXTILE NEGOTIATION AT TAIPEI BY D. KENNEDY**

Three months after the Chow-Kissinger meeting, President Nixon dispatched Treasury Secretary David Kennedy to Taiwan to negotiate the textile issue.15 Receiving a report from Taipei, Assistant to the President for International Economic Affairs Peter G. Peterson explained to Nixon the negotiation process based on Kennedy’s report.

1. Ambassador Kennedy reported that the U.S. and Taiwan had reached some preliminary understanding on several major portions of a five-year voluntary restraint program for textiles, including a nine percent average growth rate for synthetic textiles and one percent for wool.16 However, several very serious points of contention remain (base year figure and trigger mechanism for imports in categories not specifically covered in the agreement). Until they are resolved, the negotiations are at an impasse.

2. Ambassador Kennedy believes there is no give whatsoever in the U.S. industry's position on these issues and there is some strong pressure for the industry representatives to come home. The Taiwan government also has compelling reasons to be adamant. They see no reason why they should not hold out for terms at least as good as those that Japan is now giving us unilaterally. They are also concerned about being the first of the three Asian countries to voluntarily settle with us unless the terms are advantageous. The Taiwan Government feels it has taken a heavy beating from the U.S. in recent months (oil moratorium, Two-China developments) and that it would lose a great deal more international face if it were to settle for a disadvantageous bargain.

3. Ambassador Kennedy believes we have three alternatives:

(a) Go to Hong Kong and Korea with the agreement as it now stands and with an understanding with Taiwan (which they have agreed to) that they will accept a base year figure and consultation mechanism that those two countries are willing to accept. Ambassador Kennedy rejects this approach since Hong Kong and Korea would realize the problem we face with Taiwan and be in a position to exert leverage on us to give in on other matters to get what we need on the base year and the consultation mechanism.

(b) Return home now and admit failure. Ambassador Kennedy believes your prestige is on the line in the textile and footwear issues and that to fail could have very serious domestic and foreign ramifications (he believes the footwear negotiations would collapse if the textile negotiations were called off). While the industry indicates it would rather go home than give any further, he doubts that would be their feeling a few months down the road in the face of totally unrestrained textile imports.

(c) Offer certain concessions to Taiwan. Ambassador Kennedy feels the impasse can be broken without disastrous side effects for either our industry or the Taiwan Government. While the GRC stressed the importance of certain military items (F–4s for example) Ambassador Kennedy is convinced that the “only” way to resolve the issues is to withhold turning the Senkaku Islands over to Japanese administrative control under the Okinawa Reversion Agreement.

4. Ambassador Kennedy's argument on the Senkakus was as follows:

“This is a major issue in Taiwan with both domestic and international implications. If the U.S. were to maintain administrative control, it would give the GRC a tremendous public boost since they have expressed themselves so forcefully on the issues.

Further, it would be a very direct indication of our continued interest in and support for the GRC—and it would be done at Japan's expense, a point that is vital to our ability to proceed effectively with textile negotiations in Hong Kong and Korea and subsequently in Japan. Announcement of such a decision allows the GRC to save face both at home (it takes the Vice Premier off the hook) and abroad.

Taiwan could accept the current textile package in face of Hong Kong and Korean pressure. “In addition, such an act would, in my opinion, provide a very badly needed shock effect on the Japanese. It would indicate that U.S. acquiescence in all matters requested by the Japanese could no longer be taken for granted.

“I can fully appreciate the opposition which such a proposal will generate in certain quarters of our government. But I feel that this can and must be done. We accepted stewardship of these Islands after World War II. Neither historically nor geographically are they a part of the Ryukyus Chain containing Okinawa.

Consequently, the GRC suffers a great loss of face if we allow Japan to gain administrative control of them. Since possession of the Islands is still in dispute, there is every reason for the United States to maintain administrative control until such time as the dispute is settled.

Taiwan feels very strongly that once Japan had administrative control there is absolutely no possibility of their ever relinquishing that control. By no means am I suggesting that we hand the islands over to Taiwan. Rather, I am strongly recommending the wisdom of preserving the status quo rather than allowing Japan to assume administrative control with the great loss of face this entails for Taiwan.

“I know of no other action sufficiently important or sufficiently dramatic to resolve our textile problems specifically as well as to pave the way for resolution of several general international trade difficulties. The stakes involved are very high which I fully realize. I realize, too, that only the President can make such a decision. Therefore, I urge you in the strongest possible terms to present to him all the potential benefits and ramifications of my recommendations.”

5. Henry Kissinger is looking into the background of the Senkaku Islands dispute and will be able to report to you at our meeting this afternoon on what would be involved in not turning over the Senkaku Islands to Japan at this point.

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Hearing Ambassador Kennedy’s proposal, Nixon, Kissinger and Peterson gathered at Camp David to make a final decision. The result was delivered to Ambassador Kennedy immediately.

FRUS document 134. Backchannel Message From the President’s Assistant for International Economic Affairs (Peterson) to Ambassador Kennedy, in Taipei17 shows the process how Nixon’s decision was delivered to Government of Taiwan.

―Washington, June 8, 1971, 1229Z. Eyes Only for Amb Kennedy, Taipei from Peter Peterson.

After lengthy discussion, the President’s decision on the Islands is that the deal has gone too far and too many commitments made to back off now.18 I (Peterson) showed your wire (Kennedy) on this and even reread portion dealing with its importance.19

The President was deeply regretful that he could not help on this, but he felt that the decision was simply not possible. The President has instructed me to tell you that he will send a senior military representative in August to review with GRC in “a favorable and forthcoming way” important defense possibilities.20

I’ve explained that this makes final negotiations now very difficult but decision is August visit because of need to do this while Congress is out in August. Not to complicate your life further but I just talked with Roger Milliken who says that industry here was about to decide to ask everyone to come back because deal now being talked about comes up to 2.7 billion over the term, which is half billion up from 2.2 billion or 7-1/2 percent increase worked out here on the 1970 base that Milliken says was the ceiling.

Also, Milliken reports Mills will say that he can get deal from other countries similar to Japanese which will work out considerably better than deal you have offered.21

Harry Dent and I suspect that Mills may have suggested he will support quota bill as part of his own political objectives. Bryce Harlow confirms from high sources that Mills has made some kind of commitment to support quota bill next spring. Apparently, the 2.7 billion that industry representatives there agreed to strikes them as too much here in this country and that 2.2 billion was the ceiling.

I have just called Milliken to say that the President would certainly appreciate their staying with us in this effort and if it breaks up now it would be hard to reconstitute the effort. He said they felt that likelihood is good enough for quota legislation that they would probably take their chances and come home now.

My recommendation is that you tell GRC that deal must be at a volume level that you can get industry to really accept and that this is important enough to us that we will have to review defense and other carrots and sticks in order to achieve it.

Then I would go on and start in other two countries and let GRC stew about potential U.S. actions. If industry says they want to come back to U.S., I’d be inclined to go on anyway and see what it takes in other two countries to get deal industry would accept.

I think it would be better if industry would stay but it’s not essential. My reasoning is that if you can get deal that sounds reasonable not only to some of the industry but also the public, then I think we are far better off than having appeared to have failed and only Presidential alternative would be to support what could be a disastrous, wide-ranging quota bill on many categories or veto and still lose textile support.

If we don’t make any deal, it certainly would seem to hurt the President a lot and help political opponents equally. I’ve explored this with top advisers and all agree that the best deal we can make is a lot better than none at all. Do your best on this basis.22

The President deeply appreciates what you are doing.23

**THIRD SCENE:**

**PARIS MEETING BETWEEN SECRETARY OF STATE ROGERS AND FOREIGN MINISTER AICHI ON OKINAWA REVERSION TREATY**

On June 9, 1971, Secretary Rogers and Foreign Minister Aichi hold final meeting at Paris U.S. Embassy. Rogers “strongly urging GOJ to discuss issue with GRC prior to signature of Okinawa Agreement on June 17. Ambassador Nakayama sent an extremely secret telegram to Tokyo.

It reads as follows:

Regarding Senkaku (Sovereignty) Problems GOC is quite anxious about people’s reaction, and pressured Washington not to revert to Japan. Washington wishes Japan to help them, and negotiate with GOC without diminishing Japan’s own legal rights. They would request Japan to begin talks as early as possible.

Minister Aichi replied to Rogers that Japan will do it after signing the treaty, as in the case of the explanation of Joint Statement of Sato-Nixon in 1969. We have ample confidence to deal with GOC, Washington need not worry about it.

Judging from Aichi’s words to Rogers, Japan’s Foreign Ministry did not pay much attention to this problem. Mofa seems to have regarded lightly GOC’s strong demand and the negotiation process between GOC and Washington.

On the contrary, Rogers accompanied spokesman McCloskey to Paris after ‘Chiang asked that the U.S. Government categorically state at the time of the signing of the Okinawa reversion agreement that the final status of the islands had not been determined and should be settled by all parties involved.’

The writer believes that Nixon and Kissinger fully recognized that the Senkaku sovereignty issue was related with the Taiwan problem and could complicate upcoming talks with Premier Zhou Enlai.

In the event, the Okinawa Treaty was signed without any contact with GOC.

Copy of the Original Material No.877, From Ambassador Nakayama to Foreign Ministry, Tokyo

**FOURTH SCENE:**

**MEETING BETWEEN KISSINGER AND ROC AMBASSADOR CHOW.**

After half a year since signing the Okinawa Reversion treaty the Republic of China (GOC) Foreign Minister visited the U.S. and held a year-end meeting with Dr. Kissinger. **FRUS** document 180. Memorandum of Conversation is the record of their conversation.24 The conversation was held at Key Biscayne, Florida, December 30, 1971, 10:30 a.m. Participants are Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Chow Shu-kai, Foreign Minister, Republic of China Director Cheng, Republic of China His Excellency, James Shen, Republic of China Ambassador to the United States and Coleman S. Hicks, notetaker.

The conversation began with light banter among the participants.

**Chow**: It is very nice of you to take the time to see us here in Key Biscayne. I have just come from Japan and you, of course, will be meeting the Japanese in San Clemente. I have three questions that I would like to ask you. First, how secure is Taiwan from Communist attack? Second, will you press us to negotiate with Peking? And number three, I would like to raise matters regarding confiscation of property. The Japanese are very excited about these concerns.

**Kissinger**: Well, I won’t tell you anything until the Ambassador promises to invite me to another Chinese dinner. (Laughter)

**Chow**: What we are seeking is reassurance from you about these matters. We are concerned that the Communists can gain control of the air.

**Kissinger**: Let’s settle the defense question first. At my press conference in November I commented that our defense commitment was unimpaired.25 I have also said that to Chou En-lai, and our defense commitment has not been affected by our dealings with Peking. If you are attacked, we will come to your defense. Personally, I don’t think China can maintain control of the air.

**Chow**: But we are in a situation where the quantity and quality of the Communist military capacity is going up and our impression is that the military assistance program is standing still. This results in a change of the military balance.

**Kissinger:** There has been no stoppage of our military assistance program to the Republic of China.

**Chow:** This is encouraging but there is concern about it.26

**Kissinger:** Can you give me particular items? I will check into it.

**Chow:** We are interested in excess equipment, F–104s, tanks and so forth. We do not seek offensive weapons.

**Kissinger:** I can reassure you that no steps have been taken to limit the military assistance program to the Republic of China.

**Chow**: There are rumbles in the lower levels at the State Department about tie-ups in the program.

**Kissinger**: Look, the lower levels of the State Department are prone, as you have probably seen, to take credit whenever it is due someone else but at the same time to undermine support for Presidential policies. The President has a warm personal feeling for the Republic of China. The steps we have taken with the Communists have been necessary. They are cold-blooded, calculated diplomatic moves. They have nothing to do with sympathy.

**Chow**: Well, I hope you can stir things up on this military assistance program.

**Kissinger**: I thought everything was in normal channels. What did Rogers say when you talked to him this morning?

**Chow**: (unintelligible)

**Kissinger:** I, of course, don’t know the exact details about the military balance between you and the Communists, but personally I don’t believe that the Communists have the capacity to use their military force outside their borders. But if so . . .27 Coleman, get Colonel Kennedy to look into this matter.

**Chow**: Another issue relates to the submarines.

**Kissinger:** I approved that two months ago.

**Chow:** All the key matters relate to training. Secretary Rogers appears to be apprehensive about this.

**Kissinger**: We have approved this. Why would it be in our interest not to go ahead and do it? Of course we will do it.28

**Chow:** The next issue I would like to raise with you is the handling of the Senkaku Islands. When you talk to the Japanese in San Clemente, may I encourage you to consider our position? The Japanese watch very carefully the U.S. role in the Pacific and seek consultation with you. We have a difficult domestic political situation regarding the Islands. Peking wants to develop an anti-American campaign on Taiwan. We need help from our friends. The Islands don’t make any difference to Japan but they do to the people of Taiwan. Perhaps you could discuss these withered pieces of rock—there is no oil there—with the Japanese.

**Kissinger:** We will raise it with the Japanese.

**Chow:** We hope to keep them quiet about it.

**Kissinger:** You don’t want the Islands back; you just want to avoid a big fuss about them, is that right?

**Chow:** Yes, that’s right. It is like Outer Mongolia. The Japanese have an interest in Outer Mongolia. If we were on the Mainland, we might be over-sensitive about Outer Mongolia and Tibet. The important thing is that they remain politically autonomous.

**Kissinger:** You are interested in Tibet. (Laughter)

**Chow:** In our bilateral relations we will continue to play it cool. We have told the Japanese that, for instance, we will trade with everyone. We will even trade with the socialist countries like East Germany. We would rather trade, of course, with our friends, but . . .

**Kissinger:** Will you negotiate with the Mainland?

**Chow:** No.

**Kissinger:** People have asked me often about my comments on this in my press conference at the end of October. To be honest, I thought that my comments would be helpful to you. I was trying to remove that item from the agenda in Peking during the President’s visit. What I indicated was a policy of allowing the Mainland and Taiwan to settle the problem politically themselves, without the use of force. You will get no pressure from us to settle this matter as long as President Nixon remains in office. I think this is the best possible formula from your perspective. If we were to say that we would not accept a political solution, the result would be a big international incident—problems at the United Nations; in short, a big issue. As long as no pressure is put on you for a political settlement, why isn’t this formula the best possible policy?

**Shen:** When you say that it is an internal Chinese affair that gives the impression though that you are washing your hands of it.

**Kissinger:** I didn’t say that we were washing our hands of it. I said merely that we would put no pressure on you to make a political settlement and that we would tolerate no force on the part of either side in resolution of the dispute. It seems to me to be a very practical solution. Regardless, I don’t think that Zhou En-lai will renounce force. He isn’t about ready to ask us to act as an intermediary in this matter.

**Shen:** The last thing anybody would be interested in would be having you act as an intermediary.

**Kissinger:** It is important to do a little Chinese thinking here, to look at the matter in a complicated light. This issue will come up at the UN year after year. We will continually say that our policy is to tolerate no use of force in settling the political matter. What can go wrong?

**Shen:** But we need desperately to maintain our defense capacities. If they lag, it might lead the Communists to a miscalculation.

**Kissinger:** We have already talked about the defense matters. Personally, I don’t see a military capacity by the Mainland Chinese which would be effective against you. They are not about ready to use their air force against you. They are too scared of the Russians; why would they bother to take you on? You know, a hundred miles of water to cross is quite difficult.

**Chow:** But they might use tricks. They might link this issue to the prisoners of war or the Vietnam problem. Of course, we know that you are smart enough not to be taken in.

**Shen:** People on Taiwan are concerned. What we are confronting here is largely a psychological question.

**Kissinger:** Whatever materials are in the military pipeline on our systems program, we will deliver on. To be frank, I don’t know the details of exactly what is, but, Mr. Foreign Minister, when you were Ambassador in Washington, we did what you wanted, didn’t we? What you needed, we gave you. You appear to think that the Communists are quite flexible. I don’t. I believe that their domestic problems are very serious, that they will not renounce the use of force in the Taiwan issue, and also that they will not use Vietnam to pressure us on a political settlement.

**Chow:** There are many rumors about . . .

**Kissinger:** Yes, of course, I hear all these rumors. There is one that I made a deal with Chou in China that we would withdraw troops from Taiwan before his visits. Have we? Let me ask you this: Have we withdrawn any troops? I certainly don’t think so, to the best of my knowledge. There may have been some rotations, but no withdrawals.

**Chow:** (The Foreign Minister made some comments about General Barnes29which were not intelligible.)

**Kissinger:** You get all the stories that aren’t true.

**Chow:** (The Foreign Minister discussed some aspect of dealing with the Japanese—more was not understandable.)

**Kissinger:** We will talk toSato and Fukuda in San Clemente and attempt to restrain their activities in the Islands. You stick to your guns and be sure to keep us informed on all your dealings with the Communists.

**Shen:** We have certainly learned our lesson. We have talked to the President three times, to the Vice President once.

**Kissinger:** You have showed great dignity and character. Of all the sons-of-bitches in the world, you are the last of all who deserve what has happened this year.

**Chou:** Thank you very much for taking the time to meet with us today.

**Kissinger:** You must understand that what we do, we do with a heavy heart. We don’t do it to betray our friends. We take actions visà-vis the Communists only because those actions are required.I assure you again that you will get no pressure from us on any political deal with the Mainland.

At this point the party retired from Dr. Kissinger’s villa and began to walk back to the hotel, where the Chinese boarded their vehicle. During the walk, Dr. Kissinger spoke with the Foreign Minister about several problems. Dr. Kissinger emphasized again his impression that the formula of no-military action, but an openness to political accommodations, was the best possible formula for the Chinese Nationalists. On the UN issue, he acknowledged that the United States had engaged in what turned out to be a bad strategy vis-à-vis the timing of the second return from China. He indicated that he thought a two-week delay would have been possible had the matter been handled more properly. General comments were made about the Japanese vis-à-vis the United States; their touchiness on the China trip, their trading role with Taiwan, etc.30

**FIFTH SCENE:**

**OKINAWA REVERSION TREATY, HEARINGS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS UNITED STATES SENATE**

On October 27, 1971, the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations opened at 10.15 a.m., in room 4221, New Senate Office Building. Senator J. W. Fulbright chaired, saying: The treaty comes before us against a backdrop of strained United States-Japanese relations, stemming primarily from many long suppressed economic tensions and aggravated by the developments of the past few months regarding China. The United States has now stated that it seeks to normalize relations with the People’s Republic of China, a change in policy apparently taken without consultation with Japan. And the People’s Republic has now been seated as the representative of China in the United Nations**.** These important steps naturally have a substantial impact affecting U.S. security interests throughout Asia, including Okinawa. In considering the reversion treaty, the committee will be interested in examining the general effect of the treaty on United-States-Japanese relations as well as its implications for U.S. treaty commitments and security interests in Asia.”

As Fulbright said, as the United States has now stated that it seeks to normalize relations with the People’s Republic of China, the Japanese government opposed the People’s Republic of China being seated as the representative of China in the United Nations in the last minutes.

**Opening Statement by J. W. Fulbright reads:**

Today the committee opens its public hearings on the Okinawa Reversion Treaty. The treaty represents the end of an era in United States-Japan relations. It settles the last remaining major issues between the two countries arising out of World War II, returning to Japan the remaining occupied territory which has been promised it. Ratification of this treaty would remove the last vestige of occupying power status now held by the United States and would formalize a relationship of equality between the two states. In his letter transmitting the treaty to the Senate, the President has urged that the return of Okinawa “is essential to the continuation of friendly and productive relations between the United States and Japan.”

The treaty comes before us against a backdrop of strained United States-Japanese relations, stemming primarily from many long suppressed economic tensions and aggravated by the developments of the past few months regarding China. The United States has now stated that it seeks to normalize relations with the People’s Republic of China, a change in policy apparently taken without consultation with Japan. And the People’s Republic has now been seated as the representative of China in the United Nations. These important steps naturally have a substantial impact affecting U.S. security interests throughout Asia, including Okinawa. In considering the reversion treaty, the committee will be interested in examining the general effect of the treaty on United States-Japanese relations as well as its implications for U.S. commitments and security interests in Asia.

We are very pleased this morning to welcome the Secretary of State, William P. Rogers, who will initiate the presentation of the administration’s position. If I may add, Mr. Secretary, speaking personally, although there has been much criticism of the action of the United Nations and I regret that our position was not fully supported, nevertheless I personally feel that this action over a long period may prove to be beneficial to the policies of this administration. And I am not a bit discouraged as to the future of your efforts to bring about much better relations with China and the rest of the world.

**Statement of Hon. William P. Rogers, Secretary of State**; Accompanied by U. Alexis Johnson, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs reads as follows:

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman; I appreciate those remarks. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I am here today to explain why this administration considers it very important that the Senate should advise and consent to the ratification of the agreement between the United States and Japan. The agreement, signed on June 17, 1971, provides for the return of the Ryukyu Islands to the administrative control of Japan. This agreement can, I believe, truly be called an historic document. It would resolve the last major U.S.-Japanese issue arising from World War II. The agreement provides for the return to Japanese administration of an area which has been historically associated with Japan and whose population strongly desires to be united once again with its native land. The Ryukyus are also an area of significant strategic importance to the United States. The agreement takes full account of this agreement and its related arrangements would protect and promote the U.S. security interests in the Far East. Deputy Secretary Packard will discuss its security aspects in greater detail in his testimony.

Among 61 points which Rogers raised and answered to Senates questions, I will introduce three points; **No.4** Japan’s Retention of Residual Authority, **No.5** Recognizing of Japan’s Residual Authority, and **No. 17** Sovereignty of Senkaku Islands.

**No. 4 Japan’s Retention of Residual Authority**

On September 5, 1951, in presenting the draft of the peace treaty to the Peace Conference, Ambassador John Foster Dulles noted that some of the allied powers had urged that the treaty require Japan to renounce its sovereignty. Others had proposed that the islands be restored completely to Japan. “In the face of this division of allied opinion,” Ambassador Dulles said, “the United States felt that the best formula would be to permit Japan to retain residual sovereignty, while making it possible for these islands to be brought into the United Nations trusteeship system, with the United States as administering authority.” It was decided at that time that although the United States had long-term security interests in the Ryukyus, the “peace of reconciliation,” which we and most of our allies sought with Japan, would be vitiated by the islands’ enforced, permanent detachment from Japan. The “residual sovereignty” formula was clearly designed to convey the thought to Japan and to the world that although the United States was obliged to retain control of the Ryukyus temporarily for security reasons, what had been Japanese territory was not being permanently detached from Japan and the principle of no U.S. territorial acquisitions as a result of war was being observed.

**No.5 Recognizing of Japan’s Residual Authority**

In December 1953, the United States returned the northern portion of the Okinawa Island chain, the Amami Islands, to Japanese jurisdiction. In June 1957 President Eisenhower and Prime Minister Kishi reaffirmed “Japanese residual sovereignty” over the Ryukyus. In June 1961, President Kennedy and Prime Minister Ikeda did likewise. In March 1962, in connection with an executive order concerning the administration of the islands issued on the basis of a U.S. Government task force study of the Ryukyus policies and programs, President Kennedy recognized the Ryukyus “to be a part of the Japanese homeland.” He added that he “looked forward to the day when the security interests of the free world will permit their restoration to full Japanese sovereignty.” In November 1967, President Johnson and Prime Minister Sato met in Washington and agreed on the establishment of an advisory Committee to the High Commissioner “to promote the integration of the Ryukyus with Japan and thus help to minimize the stresses that would accompany reversion.” President Johnson also stated at the time that he “fully understood the desire of the Japanese people for the reversion of the islands.” The President and the Prime Minister agreed to conduct joint and continuous review of the status of the Ryukyu Islands, “guided by the aim of returning administrative rights over these islands to Japan. This left Okinawa, the Daito Islands, and the more southerly islands in the Ryukyu Archipelago as the only territories listed under Article III of the peace treaty, which were still under U.S. administration. Finally, President Nixon and Prime Minister Sato, in their communiqué of November 1969, announced that “The two Governments would immediately enter into consultations regarding specific arrangements for accomplishing the early reversion of these islands without detriment to the security of the Far East, including Japan. “The President and the Prime Minister,” the communiqué continued, “agreed to expedite the consultations with a view of accomplishing the reversion during 1972, subject to the conclusion these specific arrangements with the necessary legislative support.”

Thus Japan’s “residual sovereignty” over Okinawa has been recognized by every American President and every U.S. administration since the end of the occupation. The agreement before you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, the agreement before you and its related arrangements are the logical and timely culmination of an historic progression set in motion over 20 years ago.

―Thus, the author considers that the reversion of Okinawa is widely recognized by the Allies and by the world opinion. The problem is the sovereignty of the Senkaku Islands. Regarding this problem point No. 17 of Rogers’ explanation reads:

**No.17 Sovereignty of Island Senkaku**

**Fulbright** said: There is this troublesome question that I have seen in the paper and I wondered if you wanted to comment on it. I believe it concerns the island of Senkaku. Is that left as is without an attempt to determine its sovereignty? There was a piece in the paper the other day indicating that there may be some difficulty over the sovereignty of that island.

**Secretary Rogers replied,** Mr. Chairman I am glad you asked that question because we have made it clear that this treaty does not affect the legal status of those islands at all. Whatever the legal situation was prior to the treaty is going to be the legal situation after the treaty comes into effect.

**The Chairman**. In any case, that is not a reason to object to this treaty, whatever one may think about it. Is that correct?

**Secretary Rogers**. That is right. That is correct.

**The Chairman.** It does not affect it.

Regarding Japan’s Retention of **Residual Authorit**y there were several questions. What is the concept of **Residual Authorit**y? Is it a legal concept or just political maneuvering?

After all, the following letter by Robert I Starr, Acting Assistant Legal Adviser for East Asian and Pacific affairs is the legal position of the U.S. Government.

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

Department of State,

Washington, D.C., October 20, 1971.

Robert Morris, Esq.,

Rice & Rice,

Mercantille Dallas Building, Dallas, Tex.

Dear Mr. Morris: Secretary Rogers has asked me to reply to your letter [Robert Morris] of September 28, 1971, concerning the claim of Grace Hsu to ownership of the Tiaoyutai, Huang Wei Yu, and Chih Yu islands. We assume that you that by “Huang Wei Yu”and “Chih Yu”, you refer to Huang-wei-chiao and Chih-wei-chiao, two islets in the Tiao-yu-tai group. The Japanese names for these two islands are respectively Kobi-sho and Sekibi-sho, and the entire group is known in Japanese as the Senkaku Islands. Under Article of the 1951 Treaty of Peace with Japan, the United States acquired administrative rights over “Nansei Shoto” south of 29 degrees north latitude. This term was understood by the United States and Japan to include the Senkaku Islands, which were under Japanese administration at the end of the Second World War and which are not otherwise specifically referred to in the Peace Treaty. In accordance with understandings reached by President Nixon and Prime Minister Sato of Japan in 1969, the United States is expected to return to Japan in 1972 the administrative rights to Nansei Shoto which the United States continues to exercise under the Peace Treaty. A detailed agreement to this effect, on the terms and conditions for the reversion of the Ryukyu Islands, including the Senkakus, was signed on June 17, 1971, and has been transmitted to the Senate for its advice and consent to ratification.

The Government of the Republic of China and Japan are in disagreement as to sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands. You should know as well that the People’s Republic of China has also claimed sovereignty over the islands. The United States believes that a return of administrative rights over those islands to Japan, from which the rights were received, can in no way prejudice any underlying claims (of ROC and/or PRC). The United States cannot add to the legal rights Japan possessed before it transferred administration of the islands to us, nor can the United States, by giving back what it received, diminish the rights of other claimants. The United States has made no claim to the Senkaku Islands and considers that any conflicting claims to the islands are a matter for resolution by the parties concerned. I hope that this information is helpful to you. If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Sincerely yours,

Robert I Starr,

Acting Assistant Legal Adviser

for East Asian and Pacific affairs.

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

This is the most important legal statement of the U.S. Government on the sovereignty of the Senkaku islands. The United States has continued to maintain this position since the ratification of the Okinawa Reversion Treaty, typical examples being **China’s Maritime Territorial Claims: Implications for U.S. Interests, November 12, 2001** and **Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands Dispute: U.S. Treaty Obligations, September 25,** 2012.

Unfortunately, most Japanese people, including so-called experts on international problems, know nothing about these U.S.-Taiwan negotiations and their results. The resulting misunderstandings of the conditions of Reversion Treaty sustain Japanese nationalism.

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**Appendix: The Lessons of Japan-Taiwan agreement on fishing rights around the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands**

The Asahi reported ‘Japan, Taiwan agree on fishing rights around Senkakus’, on April 10, 2013 as follows;

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| --- |
| Japan made concessions to reach a basic agreement with Taiwan over fishing rights around the disputed Senkaku Islands, a deal that will likely rile China. Under the agreement, which could be announced as early as April 10, Taiwanese fishing boats are prohibited from entering Japan's territorial waters within 12 nautical miles of the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, according to sources. However, they can operate in the rich fishing grounds outside the territorial waters.  Tokyo and Taipei plan to set up a joint control committee to arrange the fishing fleet sizes of both sides, the sources said. Most of the area that will be under joint control lies south of 27 degrees north latitude, east of the Japan-China median line and northwest of the boundary claimed by Taiwan. The area also includes part of the waters north of the Yaeyama Islands and southeast of the boundary claimed by Taiwan, a rich fishing ground that Taipei is eager to harvest. The Senkakus, a group of five uninhabited islets and reefs, are administered by Japan but also claimed by both China and Taiwan, which call them Diaoyu and Diaoyutai, respectively. Taiwan also lays claim to fishing rights in waters around the Senkaku Islands. China has called on Taiwan to form a unified front against Japan over the Senkakus issue. "Compatriots on both sides of the strait must jointly preserve sovereignty over the Diaoyu Islands," a spokesman for the State Council of China's Taiwan Affairs Office said.  However, Japan’s concessions on fishing rights to Taiwan have driven a wedge between China and Taiwan and prevented a possible unified front over the territorial dispute. "Sovereignty cannot be divided, but resources can be shared," Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou said. Neither Tokyo nor Taipei plans to mention the sovereignty issue in the agreement. The waters around the Senkaku Islands are considered traditional operating areas for Taiwanese fishermen. With the bluefin tuna fishing season beginning in April, a delay in the agreement with Japan could have caused an uproar among Taiwanese fishermen. The part of the East China Sea close to the Senkaku and Yaeyama islands in Okinawa Prefecture is a prolific fishing ground that has attracted many fishing boats from Japan, Taiwan and China. That is also an area where exclusive economic zones claimed by the three sides overlap. The lack of a fisheries pact has meant that many Taiwanese fishing boats have been seized by Japan Coast Guard cutters. The fisheries talks between Tokyo and Taipei started in 1996, were halted in 2009, and resumed in 2012. THE ASAHI SHIMBUN |
| [<http://japanfocus.org/data/40612.jpg>](http://japanfocus.org/data/40612.jpg) |

In the writer’s view one of the most important facts is that the PRC did not strongly oppose the Japan-Taiwan fishing agreement. This is a background fact that is easily forgotten, but it is very important for future arrangements with the PRC.

A concept that provided the basis for Japan-Taiwan negotiation is Dr. Ma Ying-jeou’s thesis that "**Sovereignty cannot be divided, but resources can be shared**." Dr. Ma Ying-jeou’s Harvard Law School dissertation is titled, **Trouble over Oily Waters**: Legal Problems of Seabed Boundaries and Foreign Investments in the East China Sea, December 1980. The reason why this agreement has been successfully concluded is that neither Tokyo nor Taipei plans to mention the sovereignty issue in the agreement.

Applying Ma Ying-jeou’s thesis to the Japan-China Senkaku Conflict, Japan’s effective control over the Senkaku Islands should be respected, while, at the same time, the ROC’s and the PRC’s underlying claims of the sovereignty of Diaoyutai should also be respected. Japan should not reject ROC and PRC claims on sovereignty of the Senkaku/Diaoyutai Islands. We need a **new formula** for peace in the East China Sea.

This is a revised version of an article prepared for the inaugural meeting of the East Asian Maritime Cooperation Forum (EAMCF) at BEXCO Convention Center on December 19, 2013, sponsored by Sea Power League of the Republic of Korea (SPLRK) and Seoul National University Asia Center (SNUAC).

Yabuki Susumu, Professor emeritus at Yokohama University, is one of Japan’s leading specialists on Mao Zedong, on China-Japan Relations, and on Chinese economic development and geopolitics. His two most recent books are [ﾁャｲﾒﾘｶ―米中結託と日本の進路](http://www.amazon.co.jp/dp/4763406353?tag=theasipacjo0b-20) (Chimerica: US-China Co-dependence and Japan’s Way Forward) and [尖閣問題の核心. 日中関係はどうなる](http://www.amazon.co.jp/dp/4763406566?tag=theasipacjo0b-20)(The Core of the Senkaku Problem: What is to Become of Japan-China Relations.)

See also his [interview](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/forum/security_and_territorial_issues/AJ201212120001) with the Asahi “INTERVIEW: China-watcher Yabuki says Senkakus are a diplomatic mistake by Japan,” Dec 12, 2012

And three interviews with Yabuki by Stephen Harmer at Forbes: [Interview with Professor Yabuki on the Senkaku/Diaoyu Crisis and U.S.-China-Japan Relations](http://www.forbes.com/sites/stephenharner/2012/10/03/interview-with-professor-yabuki-on-the-senkakudiaoyu-crisis-and-u-s-china-japan-relations/), Oct 3, 2012; and [Japan and U.S. Ignored Chinese Signals and History, Blundering into the Senkaku/Diaoyu Crisis](http://www.forbes.com/sites/stephenharner/2013/02/20/japan-and-u-s-ignored-chinese-signals-and-history-blundering-into-the-senkakudiaoyu-crisis/), February 20, 2013; and Mark Selden at the Asia-Pacific Journal <http://japanfocus.org/-Yabuki-Susumu/3906> .

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**Notes**

1 Diaoyutai shi zhongguo guyou de lingtu, Guowuyuan baodao-bangongshi.

2 Congressional Research Service Report, Report for Congress, CRS 7-5700, by Mark E. Manyin

3 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China.

4 http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/senkaku/

5 Memorandum of Conversation, Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1025, President/HAK Memcons, Memcon—the President, Kissinger, and Amb. Chow Apr. 12, 1971. Top Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. The President’s Daily Diary indicates that Chow met with the President from 11:31 a.m. to 12:05 p.m. and that Emil Mosbacher, Chief of Protocol for the Department of State, was also present. (Ibid., White House Central Files) The conversation was recorded by the White House taping system. The statements in quotation marks are actually paraphrases. (Ibid., White House Tapes, Recording of conversation between Nixon and Kissinger, April 12, 1971, 11:28 a.m.–12:41 p.m., Oval Office, Conversation No. 477–3)

6 Apparent reference to the “Second Annual Report to Congress on United States Foreign Relations,” February 25, 1971, in Public Papers: Nixon, 1971, pp. 219–345.

7 Probable reference to an April 9 memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon; see Foreign Relations, 1969–1976, vol. V, Document 344. See also Document 167 in this volume.

8 Japanese-American negotiations over Okinawa sparked renewed Chinese interest in the Senkaku Islands (Tiaoyutai or Diaoyutai in Chinese). Chow gave a 4-page aide mémoire to Green on September 16, 1970, outlining ROC objections to Japanese sovereignty over the islands. (National Archives, RG 59, EA/ROC Files: Lot 75 D 61, Subject Files, Petroleum–Senkakus, January–September 1970). Shoesmith summarized reports of student demonstrations in Taipei against Japanese control of the Senkaku Islands and noted: “The Embassy believes that the initiative for the demonstrations has come from the students rather than the government. But the latter probably has given tacit approval out of reluctance to oppose the fruits of youthful patriotism and its own dissatisfaction over our China policy and oil exploration moratorium.” (Memorandum from Shoesmith to Green, April 17; ibid., Lot 75 D 76, Petroleum–Senkakus, January–March 1971) There were also student protests in the United States and Hong Kong. The White House tape of the April 12 meeting indicates that Chow emphasized that the final disposition of the Senkakus should be kept open, and that this issue was a measure of the ROC’s ability to protect itself. He emphasized the symbolic importance of the islands. (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Tapes, Recording of conversation between Nixon and Kissinger, April 12, 1971, Oval Office, Conversation No. 477–3)

9 After Chow left the Oval Office, the President remarked that Chow was correct on the need to consider the political views of overseas Chinese. (Ibid.)

10 Nixon remarked that he would not raise the issue of the U.S. position in public, but, if asked, would say that it had not changed. He also emphasized that Murphy’s visit would be private, with no press coverage, and that Murphy would report to the White House, not the Department of State. Finally he urged Chow to be “mum” about the United Nations issue until after Murphy visited Taiwan. (Ibid.) The White House also wanted to limit speculation by U.S. officials concerning policy toward China. An April 14 memorandum from Kissinger to the Acting Secretary of State reads in its entirety: “In the wake of recent developments, the President has asked that all substantive comments by U.S. officials, including responses to formal press inquiries, background statements on and off-the-record remarks and guidance to Posts abroad, concerning U.S. relations with the People’s Republic of China be cleared with him through my office.” (Ibid., NSC Files, Box 521, Country Files, Far East, China, Vol. VI)

11 Memorandum of Conversation, Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Country

Files, Far East, China, Vol. VI. Confidential. Sent for information. Drafted on April 14. The meeting was held in Kissinger’s office. In an April 14 covering memorandum, Holdridge suggested that no further distribution be made. Kissinger initialed his approval. (Ibid.) Kissinger and Chow met from 3:31 to 3:47 p.m. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 480, Miscellany, 1968–1976, Record of Schedule)

12 During April 1971 there were signs that the Republic of China had accepted the U.S. position. Kearns reported that he spoke privately with Chiang Ching-kuo after a dinner at McConaughy’s home in Taipei. He paraphrased Chiang as follows: “It is necessary for us to publicly oppose actions taken by the United States Government that favor the Chinese Communists. However, we wish the President to know that we understand the necessity of taking such actions at this time.” Chiang asked that his message be relayed to the President, and Peterson forwarded it on April 17. (Memorandum from Kearns to Peterson, April 15, and memorandum from Peterson to Nixon, April 17; both in National Archives, RG 59, S/S Files: Lot 73 D 443 and William P. Rogers’ Official and Personal Papers, White House Correspondence)

13 Asian and Pacific Council.

14 Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 521, Country Files, Far East, China, Vol. VI. Confidential. Sent for information. A notation on the memorandum indicates Kissinger saw it on April 23, 1971.

15 Memorandum From the President’s Assistant for International Economic Affairs (Peterson) to President Nixon. Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Special Files, President's Office Files, Box 12, President's Handwriting Files. Secret. Sent for action. A notation on the memorandum indicates the President saw it. This trip was arranged in early May. See [Document 121](http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d121). Overall trade policy toward the nations of East Asia is documented in Foreign Relations, 1969–1976, volume IV.

16Attached but not printed is a message sent via backchannel by Kennedy to Peterson on June 7. A relatively complete record of the Sino-American textile negotiations is in National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Special Files, Staff Member and Office Files, Peter Peterson, Box 1, 1971, Textile Negotiations (cables).

17 Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Special Files, President’s Office Files, Box 87, Memoranda for the President. Secret; Eyes Only.

18 Nixon, Kissinger, and Peterson met at Camp David from 3:25 to 4:10 p.m. on June 7. (Ibid., White House Central Files, President’s Daily Diary) According to a draft telegram to Rogers by U. Alexis Johnson: “Henry Kissinger stepped into the breach with material that I supplied him, and last night [June 7] obtained the President’s decision that we would not change our position on the Senkakus. However, this points up the heat that GRC is bringing to bear on us and in turn in some degree probably reflects the heat that GRC is feeling on a subject which it neglected for so long.” (Ibid., RG 59, U. Alexis Johnson Files: Lot 96 D 695, Nodis Chrono 1971) Kissinger and Johnson discussed the Senkaku Island issue by telephone on the morning of June 7. Johnson stated: “The principle that we are applying is that we received the islands from Japan for administration and are returning them to Japan without prejudice to the rights—no position between the two governments on it.” (Memorandum of conversation between Kissinger and Johnson, June 7, 10:35 a.m.; ibid., Telcons, May–June 1971)

19 See Document 133 and footnote 2 thereto.

20 In an October 5 memorandum to Haig, Holdridge wrote that Peterson’s office had contacted him to note that no military assistance mission had been dispatched to Taiwan. He noted, “Given Ambassador Kennedy’s promise to the GRC, and given the doubts likely to be raised in their mind by any considerable postponement of the survey mission, we should move ahead reasonably soon to send a suitable officer to Taiwan.” Haig’s handwritten comment on the bottom of the memorandum reads: “Cripes John—this is dynamite. In any event we should wait till we see how textiles come out.”(National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 522, Country Files, Far East, China, Vol. IX)

21 Representative Wilbur D. Mills (D–Arkansas) was the ranking member of the House Ways and Means Committee.

22 On June 7 Kennedy told Chiang Ching-kuo of the decision on the Senkaku Islands. Chiang asked that the U.S. Government categorically state at the time of the signing of the Okinawa reversion agreement that the final status of the islands had not been determined and should be settled by all parties involved. (Backchannel message from Kennedy to Peterson, June 9; ibid., White House Special Files, Staff Member and Office Files, Peter Peterson, Box 1, 1971, Textile Negotiations (cables)) In a June 10 memorandum to Kissinger, Johnson noted that Rogers had raised this issue with Japanese Foreign Minister Aichi at their meeting in Paris on June 9. (Ibid., RG 59, U. Alexis Johnson Files: Lot 96 D 695, Kissinger, Henry, 1971) On June 12 Peterson informed Kennedy, who was in Seoul, that Rogers had approached Aichi, “strongly urging GOJ to discuss issue with GRC prior to signature of Okinawa Agreement on June 17.” He also noted that a Department of State spokesman would announce on June 17 that a return of “administrative rights” to Japan of the Senkaku Islands “can in no way prejudice the underlying claims of the Republic of China.” (Ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Special Files, Staff Member and Office Files, Peter Peterson, Box 1, 1971, Textile Negotiations (cables)) On June 15 Peterson cabled Kennedy, in Seoul, stating that Aichi had met with the ROC Ambassador in Tokyo to discuss the Senkaku issue. (Ibid.) On July 12 Chiang Ching-kuo complained to McConaughy that “the Japanese so far have refused to talk in any meaningful way on the subject.” (Telegram 3388 from Taipei, July 12; ibid., RG 59,Central Files 1970–73, POL CHINAT)

23 An exchange of notes between Rogers and Ambassador Shen on June 29 extended and amended the October 12, 1967, agreement on trade in cotton textiles. See TIAS 6361 (the 1967 agreement), TIAS 7011 (an exchange of notes for an interim agreement signed in late December 1970), and TIAS 7135 (the June 1971 notes). The agreement was further extended and amended in August 1971 (TIAS 7177). A new agreement was reached in December 1971 (TIAS 7249, corrected in TIAS 7469). The United States and the Republic of China were also parties to a multilateral accord on trade in wool and man-made fiber textile products in December 1971 (TIAS 7493 and 7498).

24 Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 523, Country Files, Far East, China, Vol. X. Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. The meeting was held at Kissinger’s villa at the Key Biscayne Hotel. A short attached note reads: “Coleman: This is ready to go to file. JHH doesn’t think it’s necessary to have HAK read it through. Eileen.”

25 Kissinger held a short press conference on November 29 to announce the date for the President’s trip to the PRC, where he was asked about the U.S. defense commitment to the ROC. (Department of State Bulletin, December 20, 1971, p. 709)

26 In a January 14 memorandum, Holdridge informed Kissinger that “Chou’s comment probably represents a form of mild pressure on us to avoid delays or disapprovals rather than discontent over an actuality; [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] reporting has indicated considerable anxiety in the ROC Defense Ministry that we might tighten or reduce the flow of military assistance.” (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 523, Country Files, Far East, China, Vol. X)

27 All ellipses are in the source text.

28 Holdridge informed Kissinger that the Department of Defense had passed to the ROC the White House’s request that no crew members arrive in the United States prior to March 11, 1972. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 523, Country Files, Far East, China, Vol. X)

29 Apparent reference to Major General John Winthrop Barnes, who became Chief, MAAG, in the ROC in 1972.

30 Brackets in the source text.

- See more at: http://japanfocus.org/-Mark-Selden/4061#sthash.En8TgFQJ.dpuf

NYT

January 17, 2014, 5:57 am

Between China and Japan, a Tug-of-War Over Africa

By [BREE FENG](http://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/author/bree-feng/)

Elias Asmare/Associated Press Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan sits between Ethiopia’s prime minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, right, and the deputy chairman of the African Union Commission, Erastus Mwencha, during a visit to the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on Jan. 14.

Diplomatic tensions between China and Japan showed no signs of abating this past week as the two countries traded barbs over Africa.

On Thursday, Lu Shaye, head of the Chinese Foreign Ministry’s African affairs department, defended China’s engagement in the continent. China is “sincere,” Mr. Lu said, “unlike some countries” that he said are driven by self-interest and politics.

His comments followed [remarks](http://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/International-Relations/Japan-courts-Africa-with-technology-transfers-job-creation) by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, during a visit to Mozambique this month, that Japan will not just extract resources from Africa but “create jobs.” Tomohiko Taniguchi, Mr. Abe’s spokesman, [told the BBC](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-25680684) that countries like Japan “cannot provide African leaders with beautiful houses or beautiful ministerial buildings.” Instead, Japan’s policy is “to really aid the human capital of Africa.”

Mr. Abe was trying to distinguish Japan’s efforts from those of China, Europe and the United States, news agencies reported. However, at a time of tension between Japan and China, the Chinese Foreign Ministry responded angrily, calling Mr. Abe’s comments “unprofessional and ridiculous.”

Relations between the two countries have been strained because of a sovereignty dispute over several East China Sea islands and unresolved issues from Japan’s wartime past. Mr. Abe’s decision in December to visit the Yasukuni Shrine, where convicted war criminals are honored along with other Japanese war dead, drew angry condemnation from China and South Korea.

In an online [interview](http://www.xinhuanet.com/video/wjdjt0116/wz.htm) with the state news agency Xinhua on Thursday, Mr. Lu said that African countries “have already seen” that Japan was eyeing African resources and markets, wanting to compete with China and to win votes at the United Nations.

He criticized Japan’s approach as empty words whereas Chinese assistance “can be seen and touched.” China has financed the construction of numerous major infrastructure projects in Africa, including government buildings, roads and railways – often with resource-backed loans.

“During Abe’s visit to Africa, the Japanese side said China only engages in infrastructure construction,” Mr. Lu said. “The problem is, without infrastructure, how can Africa develop? Why don’t you, Japan, help Africa with basic infrastructure?”

In the days after Mr. Abe’s visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, the Chinese government waged a global diplomatic campaign denouncing Mr. Abe’s actions, which Beijing sees as disregarding Japan’s wartime past.

Shortly after Mr. Abe wrapped up [his Africa tour](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/14/world/asia/japans-leader-pledges-aid-on-africa-tour.html), which included visits to Ivory Coast and Ethiopia and pledges of hundreds of millions of dollars in aid, the Chinese ambassador to Ethiopia, Xie Xiaoyan, held a news conference at which he [accused](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/africa/2014-01/16/c_126011316.htm) the Japanese leader of being “the biggest troublemaker in Asia,” Xinhua reported.

Holding up several graphic photos that he said showed victims of Japanese atrocities during World War II, Mr. Xie said he wanted to inform Africans about Japan’s record in Asia, the article said.

Mr. Xie is one of more than a dozen Chinese ambassadors around the world who have expounded on Beijing’s views in local newspapers and television since Mr. Abe’s visit to the Yasukuni Shrine on Dec. 26.

Cui Tiankai, the Chinese ambassador to the United States and a former ambassador to Japan, wrote an [op-ed piece](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/shinzo-abe-risks-ties-with-china-in-tribute-to-war-criminals/2014/01/09/dbd86e52-7887-11e3-af7f-13bf0e9965f6_story.html) for The Washington Post this month that called the shrine “ground zero for the unrepentant view of Japan’s wartime aggression.” Mr. Abe’s visit, he said, was a challenge to the world.

On Friday, The Washington Post carried an [op-ed](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/chinas-propaganda-campaign-against-japan/2014/01/16/925ed924-7caa-11e3-93c1-0e888170b723_story.html?tid=hpModule_ea22e378-b26e-11e2-bbf2-a6f9e9d79e19) by the Japanese ambassador in the United States, Kenichiro Sasae, who called on China to “cease its dogmatic anti-Japanese propaganda campaign and work with us toward a future-oriented relationship.”

The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hong Lei, [said](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/t1119221.shtml) on Thursday that the Chinese diplomats’ actions in recent days were aimed at ensuring that countries around the world “clearly recognize the threat to world peace Mr. Abe’s visit to Yasukuni poses.”

Beijing’s recent diplomatic push in part reflects the government’s increasing appreciation of public outreach. In recent years, China has stepped up its public diplomacy – from trying to project a better image of Chinese development projects in Myanmar to setting up a Foreign Ministry-affiliated Public Diplomacy Association, led by retired senior diplomats.

Global Times, a nationalist-leaning state-run newspaper, published an [editorial](http://opinion.huanqiu.com/editorial/2014-01/4728530.html) last week that argued that the war of words was an important fight that China “must not lose.”

“There is no smoke in this ‘Chinese-Japanese public opinion war’ but it is a special 21st century battlefield,” the paper said.

NYT

January 27, 2014, 9:18 pm

# Anxiety Rising Over Relations Between Japan and China

By [ANDREW ROSS SORKIN](http://dealbook.nytimes.com/author/andrew-ross-sorkin/)

Eric Piermont/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan at the World Economic Forum last Wednesday.

DAVOS, Switzerland — Even with all the optimism about the global economy here last week at the annual meeting of the [World Economic Forum](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/w/world_economic_forum/index.html?inline=nyt-org), there was a remarkable economic and political risk that appeared to have been largely overlooked: The long-simmering battle between China and Japan may be close to boiling over. One top executive went so far as to describe the nations’ relationship as a “stealth war.”

The implications for the global economy — and some of the largest multinational companies — are profound. China and Japan represent the second- and third-largest economies in the world, after the United States, and they are among each other’s largest trade partners. [General Motors](http://dealbook.on.nytimes.com/public/overview?symbol=GM&inline=nyt-org), [Microsoft](http://dealbook.on.nytimes.com/public/overview?symbol=MSFT&inline=nyt-org), [Boeing](http://dealbook.on.nytimes.com/public/overview?symbol=BA&inline=nyt-org), [Nike](http://dealbook.on.nytimes.com/public/overview?symbol=NKE&inline=nyt-org), [Coca-Cola](http://dealbook.on.nytimes.com/public/overview?symbol=KO&inline=nyt-org) and [Procter & Gamble](http://dealbook.on.nytimes.com/public/overview?symbol=PG&inline=nyt-org), among others, have huge businesses in both countries.

“I probably spoke to no less than 40 U.S. C.E.O.’s here and I would say this issue came up in more than half of those conversations,” said Ian Bremmer, the political scientist who founded the Eurasia Group, the political risk consulting firm. “This week at Davos, for me, the big takeaway was that China-Japan was much more problematic than we thought. The possibility that you get anti-Japanese sentiment in a big way and it causes real disruption on trades and hurting both economies is real.”

If you need evidence of the significance of this geopolitical clash, look no further than the surprising comment made here by Prime Minister [Shinzo Abe](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/a/shinzo_abe/index.html?inline=nyt-per) of Japan, who said his country’s relationship with China was in a “similar situation” to the one [between Germany and Britain](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/24/world/asia/japans-leader-compares-strain-with-china-to-germany-and-britain-in-1914.html) before World War I.

Mr. Abe was trumped by Wu Xinbo, a Chinese university dean who is considered close to China’s leadership, [when he described Mr. Abe as a “troublemaker”](http://www.weforum.org/sessions/summary/global-security-context-1) and, at one point, compared him, somewhat obliquely, to [Kim Jong-un](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/k/kim_jongun/index.html?inline=nyt-per), the North Korean dictator.

“I have to say that the political trust between the two countries now is very low,” Mr. Wu said, suggesting that he expects “political relations between our two countries will stay very cool, even frozen, for the remaining years of the Abe administration in Japan.”

Problems between China and Japan have long been festering, especially as Mr. Abe has sought to rewrite the country’s Constitution and build the country’s military, which has long been considered only defensive.

Tensions rose when China angered Japan last November when it claimed an air defense identification zone over a chain of islands in the East China Sea that the countries have disputed claims over. The conflict increased after Mr. Abe visited the Yasukuni Shrine, where Japanese war dead are commemorated, including several war criminals who were executed after Japan’s defeat in World War II. The trip offended many Chinese, and the Obama administration had warned Mr. Abe not to visit the shrine.

China-Japan political relations have been strained since the end of World War II. Previous visits by Japanese politicians have angered China and South Korea, which both suffered greatly under Japan’s empire-building efforts then. And the Japanese citizenry has often sought to distance itself from its imperialist past, preferring instead to highlight the nation’s economic progress and prowess.

Yet now, the intensity of the feelings of mutual distrust is striking. According to Pew Research, just 1 in 20 Japanese “have a favorable attitude toward China” and “anti-Japan sentiment is quite strong in China, where 90 percent of the public has an unfavorable opinion of Japan.”

The latest tensions are having a direct economic impact; the Japanese, for example, are investing less in China.

Mr. Bremmer, of the Eurasia Group, put it bluntly: “The Chinese have written off Shinzo Abe as someone they can potentially work with. They mistrust him completely. They believe he is belligerent toward them and believe an escalatory policy is the appropriate one to pursue.”

After Mr. Abe made his comment comparing his country’s relationship as being similar to Britain and Germany in 1914, when the two countries were major trading partners, China’s leaders made their own attacks. “Rather than using pre-World War I Anglo-German relations, why don’t you deeply examine your mistakes during the First Sino-Japanese War, the Japanese colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula and the fascist war that Japan launched on victim countries in World War II?” Qin Gang, a spokesman for China’s foreign ministry, asked of Mr. Abe.

Mr. Abe, in fairness, did try to play down any hints that the simmering tensions would lead to a prolonged military conflict.

“Japan has sworn an oath to never again wage a war,” Mr. Abe said in his speech. “We have never stopped, and will continue to be wishing for the world to be at peace.”

But that’s not what many of the executives and regulators I spoke to after his presentation took away from his comments. “I’m going to be asking our teams in China and Japan to do a full analysis of the risks to our business when I get home,” one Fortune 500 C.E.O. told me, seeming anxious. “Maybe this should have been on my radar before, but it is now.”

So what’s the biggest risk?

“The possibility of a mistake where someone gets killed is going up,” Mr. Bremmer said. “They are scrambling their fighters in the East China Sea every day.”

And the misunderstandings could deepen. “More problematically, the aftermath of a mistake will have both countries actively mistrusting the intentions of each other without a mechanism to really talk to each other and without the Americans acting as an interlocutor,” Mr. Bremmer said.

Mr. Wu said that the possibility of war was overstating the case: “China doesn’t want to fight a war.”

One of the greatest challenges multinational companies doing business in the region may face is that the United States government may not be positioned to step into the middle of the debate. Many of the American officials who were closest to Japan have left the Obama administration. [Hillary Rodham Clinton](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/c/hillary_rodham_clinton/index.html?inline=nyt-per), Kurt Campbell and Tom Donilon — all known for being the architects of President Obama’s “pivot” toward Asia — are no longer there, nor is [Timothy F. Geithner](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/g/timothy_f_geithner/index.html?inline=nyt-per), who worked in Japan in the 1990s and had close relationships with many senior leaders.

“Kerry doesn’t really do Asia,” Mr. Bremmer said about Secretary of State [John Kerry](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/k/john_kerry/index.html?inline=nyt-per), who would most likely take umbrage at that assertion. “[Susan Rice](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/r/susan_e_rice/index.html?inline=nyt-per)? No,” he said of the United States ambassador to the [United Nations](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/u/united_nations/index.html?inline=nyt-org).

“Who is paying attention to foreign policy in Obama-land or in Congress? Nobody.” Whether that is true or not, it is clear that China, long seen as a fast-growing economy, and Japan, which has experienced a rebound in the last year, now should be added to the list of political and economic risks that businesses should consider in 2014.

# China, Japan and the first world war

### Echoing of the guns of August

Jan 23rd 2014, 5:45 by Banyan | SINGAPORE



SHINZO ABE, Japan’s prime minister, seems to have found the perfect riposte to China’s constant comparisons of his administration to the one that led Japan into the second world war: to liken China to the German regime ahead of the first world war. Of course, in a year that marks the hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of that war, Mr Abe is neither the first nor will he be the last [to draw parallels](http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21591853-century-there-are-uncomfortable-parallels-era-led-outbreak" \t "_self). But as the leader of a country that would be on the front line of a renewed conflict, his words weigh more heavily than those of academics or journalists.

Mr Abe made his remarks at that annual gathering of the great, the good, the winter-sporty and those whose presence is presumably not essential to the smooth running of their countries or businesses: the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Talking—on the record—[to a group of journalists](http://blogs.ft.com/the-world/2014/01/davos-leaders-shinzo-abe-on-war-economics-and-women-at-work/%20" \t "_blank),  Mr Abe said that China and Japan are in “a similar situation” to that of  Germany and Britain a century ago.

In fact, the point he seemed to be making was not so much about growing military rivalry and naval competition—though of course, with the tense dispute over the Senkaku or Diaoyu islands, that is also a factor. Rather he was making a commonly made salutary argument: that those who think war is impossible between China and Japan because they are so intertwined economically overlook the way a previous wave of fast-growing trade and globalisation ended—in a cataclysmic war.

Since America has a mutual-security treaty with Japan, which it has repeatedly affirmed covers the Senkakus, the risk is indeed of a global conflict. Elsewhere at Davos, a Chinese “professional” speaking in a forum where his identity was kept confidential, shared [a rather terrifying analysis](http://www.businessinsider.com/china-japan-conflict-could-lead-to-war-2014-1" \t "_blank) of the stand-off over the islands. Seeming to regard limited conflict as inevitable, he suggested China might be contemplating a symbolic “invasion”, planting a flag on the islands.

It is hard to imagine that China’s leaders are seriously contemplating such a foolhardy adventure. But the risk of an accidental collision or clash between Chinese and Japanese boats or aeroplanes around the islands does make armed conflict [a real possibility](http://www.cfr.org/japan/sino-japanese-clash-east-china-sea/p30504" \t "_blank)—even a probability, in the eyes of some experts.

It does not help that Chinese and Japanese officials are now using every possible opportunity to make their case against the other country. [Mr Abe’s set-piece speech](http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/96_abe/statement/201401/22speech_e.html" \t "_blank) at Davos did not name China but it did not need to. It was an unmistakable call for the world to back Japan in standing up to China's rise, before it is too late. China, for its part, keeps calling Mr Abe names (“troublemaker” is the favourite) and uses his visit to the controversial Yasukuni shrine in December 2013 to make its own historical analogies. Comparing Mr Abe's government with the wartime regime of the Japanese war criminals who are among those enshrined at Yasukuni, of course.

Joseph Nye, a political scientist at Harvard, has warned of the dangers of [the current vogue for historical analogy](http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/joseph-s--nye-asks-whether-war-between-china-and-the-us-is-as-inevitable-as-many-believe-world-war-i-to-have-been" \t "_blank). Sensibly he points out that “war is never inevitable, though the belief that it is can become one of its causes.”  However, if Mr Abe’s remarks were intended not just to score debating points, but to draw attention to the very serious risks this argument carries, then he should be applauded.

[Business Insider](http://www.businessinsider.com) More: [China](http://www.businessinsider.com/category/china) [Japan](http://www.businessinsider.com/category/japan) [Senkaku Islands](http://www.businessinsider.com/category/senkaku-islands) [Davos](http://www.businessinsider.com/category/davos)   
Someone Just Said Something About The Japan-China Conflict That Scared The Crap Out Of Everyone

[Henry Blodget](http://www.businessinsider.com/author/henry-blodget)

Jan. 22, 2014, 9:51 AM 84,589 [166](http://www.businessinsider.com/china-japan-conflict-could-lead-to-war-2014-1#comments)



[Wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Senkaku_Islands)

I went to one of those fancy private dinners last night in Davos, Switzerland.

Like most of the events here at [the 2014 World Economic Forum](http://www.weforum.org/events/world-economic-forum-annual-meeting-2014/about" \t "_blank), the dinner was conducted under what are known as "Chatham House Rules," which means that I can't tell you who was there.

I can tell you what was said, though. And one thing that was said rattled a lot of people at the table.

During the dinner, the hosts passed a microphone around the table and asked guests to speak briefly about something that they thought would interest the group.

One of the guests, an influential Chinese professional, talked about the simmering conflict between China and Japan over a group of tiny islands in the Pacific.

China and Japan, you may recall, each claim ownership of these islands, which are little more than [a handful of uninhabited rocks between Japan and Taiwan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yasukuni_Shrine). Recently, the Japan-China tension around the islands has increased, and has led many analysts, including [Ian Bremmer of the Eurasia Group](http://www.businessinsider.com/japan-china-crisis-is-a-huge-geopolitical-problem-2013-1), to worry aloud about the potential for a military conflict.

The Chinese professional at dinner last night did not seem so much worried about a military conflict as convinced that one was inevitable. And not because of any strategic value of the islands themselves (they're basically worthless), but because China and Japan increasingly hate each other.

The Chinese professional mentioned the islands in the context of the recent visit by Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo. The [Yasukuni Shrine is a Shinto shrine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yasukuni_Shrine) where Japanese killed in Japan's many military conflicts over the centuries are memorialized — including the Japanese leaders responsible for the attacks and atrocities Japan perpetrated in World War 2. A modern-day Japanese leader visiting the Yasukuni Shrine is highly controversial, because it is viewed by Japan's former (and current) enemies as an act of honoring war criminals.

That's certainly the way the Chinese professional at the dinner viewed it.

He used the words "honoring war criminals," to describe Abe's visit to the shrine. And, with contained but obvious anger, he declared this decision "crazy."

He then explained that the general sense in China is that China and Japan have never really settled their World War 2 conflict. Japan and America settled their conflict, he explained, and as a result, the fighting stopped. But China and Japan have never really put the war behind them.

The Chinese professional acknowledged that if China asserted control over the disputed islands by attacking Japan, America would have to stand with Japan. And he acknowledged that China did not want to provoke America.

But then he said that many in China believe that China can accomplish its goals — smacking down Japan, demonstrating its military superiority in the region, and establishing full control over the symbolic islands — with a surgical invasion.

In other words, by sending troops onto the islands and planting the flag.

The Chinese professional suggested that this limited strike could be effected without provoking a broader conflict. The strike would have great symbolic value, demonstrating to China, Japan, and the rest of the world who was boss. But it would not be so egregious a move that it would force America and Japan to respond militarily and thus lead to a major war.

Well, when the Chinese professional finished speaking, there was stunned silence around the table.

The assembled CEOs, investors, executives, and journalists stared quietly at the Chinese professional. Then one of them, a businessman, reached for the microphone.

"Do you realize that this is absolutely crazy?" the businessman asked.

"Do you realize that this is how wars start?"

"Do you realize that those islands are worthless pieces of rock... and you're seriously suggesting that they're worth provoking a global military conflict over?"

The Chinese professional said that, yes, he realized that. But then, with conviction that further startled everyone, he said that the islands' value was symbolic and that their symbolism was extremely important.

Challenged again, the Chinese professional distanced himself from his earlier remarks, saying that he might be "sensationalizing" the issue and that he, personally, was not in favor of a war with Japan. But he still seemed certain that one was deserved.

I'm far from an expert on the Japan-China conflict, and I'll leave the analyses of this situation to those who are. All I can tell you is that a respected, smart, and influential Chinese professional suggested at dinner last night that a surgical invasion by China of the disputed islands is justified and would finally settle the Japan-China conflict without triggering a broader war. And that suggestion freaked out everyone in the room.

**UPDATE:** Around the time I published this post, Gideon Rachman of the Financial Times tweeted the following about an interview with Shinzo Abe, the Prime Minister of Japan. In case you've forgotten, 1914 is when World War 1 started.

Just interviewed Shinzo Abe [@Davos](https://twitter.com/davos). He said China and Japan now are in a "similar situation" to UK and Germany before 1914.

**NYT In Japan’s Drill With the U.S., a Message for Beijing**

By [HELENE COOPER](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/c/helene_cooper/index.html)FEB. 22, 2014



An officer watched as Marines and Japanese soldiers were transported during an annual joint exercise called Iron Fist in Camp Pendleton, Calif. Joe Klamar/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. — In the early morning along a barren stretch of beach here last week, Japanese soldiers and American Marines practiced how to invade and retake an island captured by hostile forces.

Memo to Beijing: Be forewarned.

One Marine sergeant yelled for his men, guns drawn, to push into the right building as they climbed through the window of an empty house meant to simulate a seaside dwelling.  The Marines had poured out of four amphibious assault vehicles as another group of smaller inflatable boats carrying soldiers of Japan’s Western Army Infantry Regiment landed in an accompanying beachhead assault.

There were shouts in Japanese. There were shouts in Marine English.There was air support, from Huey and Cobra helicopters hovering above. Then larger Navy hovercrafts roared in, spitting up a spray of seawater before burping out Humvees and more Japanese troops, their faces blackened with camouflage paint.

American military officials, viewing the cooperative action of the former World War II enemies from a nearby hillside, insisted that the annual exercise, called Iron Fist, had nothing, nothing to do with last fall’s game of chickenbetween Tokyo and Beijing over islands that are largely piles of rocks in the East China Sea. But Lt. Col. John O’Neal, commander of the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, said that this year, the Japanese team came with “a new sense of purpose.”



Launch media viewer

The Japanese arrived nearly 250 strong as tensions with Beijing over a set of disputed islands in the East China Sea continue. Joe Klamar/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

“There are certainly current events that have added emphasis to this exercise,” he said, as Japanese soldiers made their way up into the rocks before disappearing into the hills above the beach. “Is there a heightened awareness? Yes.”

In the United States military, commanders are increasingly allied in alarm with Japan over China’s flexing of military muscle. Capt. James Fanell, director of intelligence and information operations with the United States Pacific Fleet, recently said in San Diego that China was training its forces to be capable of carrying out a “short, sharp” war with Japan in the East China Sea.

In a sign of continuing concern, Gen. Ray Odierno, the Army chief of staff, was in China over the weekend seeking to improve the limited relationship between the American and Chinese militaries, perhaps through exchanges of top officers. In recent years, the Pentagon has worried about the buildup of China’s military and a lack of transparency among its leaders.

The islands at the center of the dispute, known as the Senkaku in Japanese and the Diaoyu in Chinese, are a seven-hour boat ride from Japan, even farther from China, and thought to be surrounded by man-eating sharks. Japan has long administered the islands, but they are claimed by China and Taiwan.

Last year, China set off a trans-Pacific uproar when it declared that an “air defense identification zone” gave it the right to identify and possibly take military action against aircraft near the islands. Japan refused to recognize China’s claim, and the United States defied China by sending military planes into the zone unannounced — even as the Obama administration advised American commercial airlines to comply with China’s demand and notify Beijing in advance of flights through the area.



Launch media viewer

United States Marines participated in an amphibious assault exercise in Camp Pendleton. Joe Klamar/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

A few weeks later, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan approved a five-year defense plan that took the pacifist nation further toward its most assertive military posture since World War II.

This year, when Japanese troops showed up for the exercise with the Marines at Camp Pendleton, they came packing. Instead of the platoon of 25 soldiers they sent to the exercise in 2006, the first year it was conducted, the Japanese arrived nearly 250 strong.They brought along their own Humvees, gear and paraphernalia for retaking islands — or, in Marine parlance, “amphibious assault with the intent to seize objectives inland.”

The monthlong exercise, which ends Monday, has been spread over a wide section of Southern California. There was the amphibious assault at Camp Pendleton, mortar shoots at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center at Twentynine Palms and live firing exercises at San Clemente Island. There was a nighttime raid at Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, presumably out of sight of guests sipping pink Champagne on the verandas of the bejeweled Hotel del Coronado a short distance away.

This year’s Iron Fist, Colonel O’Neal said, was the largest and most involved operation so far. The exercise included drones and the kinds of air support that would be needed to protect Japanese and American troops retaking an island, though the “shaping” that would normally be done in a real-world assault — when the Air Force and Navy bomb intended targets before carrying out an actual ground invasion — was only implied.

In the waters just off Coronado last month, Japanese soldiers, clutching their gear, pushed rubberreconnaissance boats out of a hovering helicopter and jumped into the cold water as part of what the Marines called “helo cast” training. The bread and butter of the Marine Corps, helo cast training, with its emphasis on fast and light movements into hostile territory, is not the type of training which Japanese troops have routinely had in the past.



Launch media viewer

American military officials insisted that the annual exercise was unrelated to the disputebetween Tokyo and Beijing over islands in the East China Sea. T. Lynne Pixley for The New York Times

The Japanese soldiers and the Marines have spent much of the past month managing a considerable language barrier. Although they have worked side by side in the joint exercises, they are not intertwined, hence the reason for the parallel amphibious landings. Marine interpreters and their Japanese counterparts dashed between the two militaries, discussing coordinates and plans.

For Japan, the Iron Fist exercise is a “valuable opportunity where we can learn various techniques from the U.S. forces,” Col. Matushi Kunii, the Japanese commander of the Western Army Infantry Regiment, said at the opening ceremony last month.

For Japan, defense experts said, the shift to the more comprehensive training with the Marines is a direct response to a more assertive China. “The Japanese have been getting more serious about broadening their training,” said Christopher K. Johnson,senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, because “the Chinese are doing their own exercises that look a lot like island-grabbing.”

He pointed to recent military exercises by China that Asia experts believe could be rehearsals for landing operations targeting the uninhabited islands.

And imagine, Asia experts said, if China became assertive about islands where people actually live, like Okinawa.

Some Asia experts believe that is already happening, pointing to recent talk from Chinese scholars, though not the Chinese government, about Okinawa, which the Japanese call Ryukyu.

“All of a sudden,” said Andrew Oros, an associate professor of political science at Washington College in Chestertown, Md., and a specialist on East Asia, “it’s no longer about protecting some deserted island; it’s about protecting somewhere where more than one million Japanese people live.”

NYT

# Hagel Tours Chinese Aircraft Carrier

By [HELENE COOPER](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/c/helene_cooper/index.html)APRIL 7, 2014

QINGDAO, China — Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel finally got a long-awaited look at China’s only aircraft carrier on Monday, taking a two-hour tour of the vessel at a naval base near this port city that Pentagon officials said was the first such visit by a foreign defense official.

Accompanied by a handful of aides, Mr. Hagel toured the medical facilities, living quarters and flight control station of the Liaoning aircraft carrier in Qingdao, and took a walking tour of the flight deck to see launch stations and other apparatus devoted to getting China’s fighter jets into the air.

Mr. Hagel and other Obama administration officials have repeatedly called on the Chinese government to demonstrate more transparency, particularly in its military, whose budget has increased significantly even as the United States cuts back on defense spending.

After Qingdao, Mr. Hagel flew to Beijing, where he was scheduled to hold talks on Tuesday with his Chinese counterpart and to deliver a speech at China’s National Defense University.

Military officials accompanying Mr. Hagel said the visit to the ship was a big step in the fledgling military relationship between the United States and China, two global powers that have been increasingly at loggerheads over what many American officials view as Beijing’s aggressive posture toward Japan and other neighbors.

But Mr. Hagel’s aides said that even if they received only a limited look at China’s maritime capability, they viewed the visit to the ship as one bright light in what could be an otherwise contentious trip.

“It’s always good to get aboard a ship,” Rear Adm. John F. Kirby, the Pentagon press spokesman, told reporters after the tour. “It feels the same, it smells the same.”

Defense officials said that the Chinese carrier is significantly less advanced than its American counterparts, but they added that it can carry out the main function of an aircraft carrier — receiving and launching fighter planes.

Mr. Hagel arrived on Monday in Qingdao, where China will host the Western Pacific Naval Symposium this month, a meeting of countries that border the Pacific Ocean that is held every two years. The W.P.N.S., as it is known in naval circles, counts among its members the United States, Australia, Chile, Canada and a number of Asian countries, including China and Japan.

Often at such meetings, the host country organizes an international fleet review at which visiting countries can show off their ships and hardware. It can be an eye-popping display of warships, destroyers and guided-missile cruisers. In 2008, when South Korea hosted the symposium, the United States sent the aircraft carrier George Washington, the guided missile cruiser Cowpens and the destroyer John S. McCain to take part.

For this year’s fleet review, China invited all the countries in the symposium to take part — except Japan.

“It is so totally high school,” a senior American defense official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the issue publicly.

On the eve of Mr. Hagel’s trip, Pentagon officials announced that if Japan could not take part in the review, then the United States would not either. The United States will attend the meeting, the Pentagon said, but no American ships will participate in the fleet review.

“As of this moment, there is no intent to send a U.S. ship to participate,” a Pentagon official said in a carefully worded statement. “W.P.N.S. is an important multilateral venue that promotes collaboration among navies in an inclusive, cooperative and constructive forum.”

The United States has been witness to disputes between Japan and China for decades, but things have seemed to be coming to a boil in recent months. Late last year, China set off a trans-Pacific [uproar](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/24/world/asia/china-warns-of-action-against-aircraft-over-disputed-seas.html) after it declared that an “air defense identification zone” gave it the right to identify and possibly take military action against aircraft near uninhabited islands in the East China Sea that are known in Japan as the Senkaku Islands and in China as the Diaoyu Islands. Japan controls and administers the islands, but China claims them.

Japan refuses to recognize China’s claim, and the United States has defied China by sending military planes into the zone unannounced.

In February, Capt. James Fanell, the director of intelligence and information operations with the United States Pacific Fleet, said that China was training its forces to be capable of carrying out a “short, sharp” war with Japan in the East China Sea. Other American officials noted with increasing concern the buildup of China’s military and what they called a lack of transparency among its leaders.

During a news conference on Sunday with Japan’s minister of defense, Itsunori Onodera, Mr. Hagel sounded exasperated with China.

“I will be talking with the Chinese about its respect for their neighbors,” he said, urging the country to use its “great power” in a responsible way. “You cannot go around the world and redefine boundaries and violate territorial integrity and the sovereignty of nations by force, coercion or intimidation, whether it’s in small islands in the Pacific or in large nations in Europe,” he said.

Pentagon officials said Mr. Hagel had no official plans to raise the fleet review issue during his talks with officials in China, but they acknowledged that the issue might come up anyway.

Japan’s occupation of China during World War II is part of the reason Beijing does not like the idea of Japanese ships’ taking part in the fleet review, Asia experts said. But they also expressed alarm over China’s recent worldwide [public relations campaign](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/09/world/asia/china-exhibit-part-of-an-anti-japan-campaign-reflects-an-escalating-feud.html) to increase criticism of Japan. Dozens of Chinese ambassadors have criticized Japan in letters written to global newspapers; in one, China’s ambassador to Britain compared Japan to the evil Lord Voldemort of “Harry Potter” fame. The shunning of Japan’s fleet, analysts said, is just the latest in the anti-Japan campaign underway in China.

In Tokyo, the American decision to shun the fleet review in solidarity with Japan was greeted warmly, and analysts said it could help allay growing concerns in Japan about whether the United States would stand alongside Tokyo in facing China’s rising military might.

“This is a very positive step toward addressing Japanese concerns,” said Narushige Michishita, the director of security and international studies at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies in Japan. “The decision is being seen here as a signal from the U.S. that its deterrence still has credibility.”

But “this sort of tit for tat shows how the U.S. is being drawn into the escalating row over history that China and Japan have been engaging in,” said Andrew Oros, a specialist on East Asia and an associate professor of political science at Washington College in Maryland. “It may seem irrelevant, but it exposes how surface-level issues illustrate serious underlying problems between the two largest economies in Asia, and the second- and third-largest economies in the world.”

NYT

# Negotiating Asia’s Troubled Waters

By MICHAEL J. GREENAPRIL 23, 2014

WASHINGTON — The mounting tensions between Tokyo and Beijing over the small chain of islands in the East China Sea called the Senkaku by Japan and the Diaoyu by China have profound implications for United States interests and the future of Asia.

Both Tokyo and Washington can do more to reduce tensions, but the fundamental problem is China’s pattern of coercion against neighbors along its maritime borders. Any American plan to ease the strain between Japan and China should convince Beijing that coercion will no longer work — but that dialogue and confidence building measures might.

## [Op-Ed Contributor: America Should Step Back from the East China Sea DisputeAPRIL 23, 2014](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/24/opinion/america-should-step-back-from-the-east-china-sea-dispute.html)

The competing Japanese and Chinese claims to the islands, which are under Japanese control, are rooted in obscure historical documents and verbal understandings. Japan argues that China’s historical claims to the islands are revisionist, noting that Chinese officials never asserted sovereignty over the islands before 1971. Chinese officials say that by purchasing several of the islands in 2012 from private Japanese landowners, the Japanese government broke a tacit bilateral agreement dating from the 1970s to set the dispute aside.

Yet while each side says the other broke the status quo, China has been pressing its claim by increasing maritime patrols in the waters around the islands, embargoing strategic metal exports to Japan (in violation of international agreements), and expanding military operations around — and even through — the Japanese archipelago.

Maritime states from India to the Philippines are watching the friction between China and Japan with great concern. Beijing has used similar pressure tactics in disputes with those countries since the Central Military Commission approved a “Near Sea Doctrine” five years ago with the aim of asserting greater control over the waters of the East and South China Seas. The doctrine includes not only the sea, but also the air, as Beijing demonstrated last November when it announced an Air Defense Identification Zone over a range of small islands and waters in the East China Sea administered by Japan and South Korea.

Thus the issue at stake is not just the conflict between Japan and China over islets, but the more fundamental question of whether China will use its growing economic and military power to assert its interests without respect to international norms — or to American power.

The Obama administration has reiterated that the 1960 U.S.-Japan security treaty covers islands, like the ones in the East China Sea, even though Washington has not taken a position on the underlying sovereignty question.

All of the parties have an interest in avoiding an accidental conflict in the East China Sea. But the worst thing Washington could do is push Tokyo to compromise with Beijing in the face of Chinese pressure.

The Obama administration did just that with Manila two years ago, and the results were a setback for Washington.

At that time, China was also using expanded maritime patrols and mercantile embargoes to compel Manila to compromise in a dispute over the Scarborough Shoal in the Philippine Sea. As the possibility of a clash mounted because Manila insisted on protecting its traditional control of the suddenly contested waters, the Obama administration got nervous and brokered a deal in which both sides would pull back their ships.

After a brief withdrawal, China’s maritime forces rushed back in to take control, blocking not only the Philippines’ small navy, but also local fishermen whose families have made their livings around the shoals for generations. Manila has taken the issue to the International Court of Justice and Mr. Obama will announce a new security cooperation and access agreement when he visits the Philippines next week, but China has no intention of accepting the court’s arbitration, and Beijing considers the episode a victory.

The United States must not make the same mistake of being overly even-handed in the East China Sea dispute, where the stakes are higher. The best way to avoid an accidental military confrontation would be for China to accept Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s offer for open dialogue with President Xi Jinping, and the Japanese government’s proposal for military-to-military confidence-building talks, improved communications channels for ships and planes, and activation of a hotline.

China has refused all of these overtures. Instead, Beijing has engaged in a propaganda campaign designed to demonize the Japanese prime minister as a militarist — he increased Japan’s defense spending 0.8 percent — and has argued that Mr. Abe must fundamentally change his attitude before there can be a summit meeting between the two leaders.

Meanwhile, the People’s Liberation Army has resisted Japanese confidence-building proposals, viewing military tensions and uncertainty as means to force compromise on underlying disputes.

Mr. Obama should make Chinese acceptance of these proposals the centerpiece of his public and private discussions about the island standoff when he is in Asia this week and next.

At their talks in Tokyo, Mr. Obama and Mr. Abe should also reiterate their intention to finalize new guidelines for bilateral defense cooperation by the end of the year, which would send a strong signal to potential adversaries that the United States and Japan will be ready to stand side-by-side in any regional crisis and that any efforts to isolate Japan from the United States will fail.

At the same time, Mr. Obama and Mr. Abe need to talk about measures that will reassure China and offer potential off-ramps to the crisis.

One would be to push for resumption of earlier discussions between China and Japan on joint development of resources in the East China Sea. Another would be for Mr. Abe to take advantage of a slight decrease in Chinese operations around the islands this year to see if Beijing might agree to longer-term arrangements accompanied by more open communication and transparency. Any small opening is worth exploring.

The bottom line is that the United States is not going to resolve the underlying dispute over the islands, which is about the future structure of power and order in the Western Pacific and not just fish, gas or nationalism. Though nowhere near as brazen as President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia in the Ukraine, China is testing the durability of the American-backed status quo and United States alliances in Asia. This line of thinking in Beijing about the region will not disappear overnight, but if the United States is credibly engaged with allies and partners to dissuade any use of coercion, there will be room for confidence-building measures that reduce tensions and buy time for later diplomatic resolutions. Japan has useful proposals on the table, and deserves international support.

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## Japan and its neighbours

### Springtime in Tokyo? Hints emerge that troubled relations could be improving in North-East Asia

Apr 26th 2014 | SEOUL AND TOKYO | [From the print edition](http://www.economist.com/printedition/2014-04-26)



ON THE face of it, conditions are hardly propitious for an improvement in Japan’s strained relations with its East Asian neighbours. This week over 150 Japanese lawmakers paid their respects during the spring festival at the Yasukuni shrine in Tokyo (pictured above), which honours not only Japan’s war dead but also convicted war criminals. South Korea and China were duly incensed.

Then, on the eve of a state visit to Japan (he goes on to South Korea, Malaysia and the Philippines), Barack Obama became the first American president to assure Japan that the Senkakus, a clutch of uninhabited islands also claimed by China, fell squarely under America’s defence obligations to its treaty ally. On arrival in Tokyo on April 23rd, he met informally with Shinzo Abe, Japan’s prime minister, at a famous sushi bar before an official summit the following day.

Other barriers to better regional relations include a military radar station Japan has started building this month on Yonaguni, its westernmost island; and the court-ordered impounding of a Japanese merchant ship in a Chinese port in lieu of two Chinese vessels expropriated by Japan in the 1930s.

Yet growing diplomatic activity suggests relations may soon become more constructive than all this acrimony suggests. Until recently leaders in South Korea and China said that they could not deal with Mr Abe, a nationalist who thinks Japan has apologised enough for its wartime aggression. Now both are putting out feelers to him. His government, in turn, is recognising the costs to Japan of strained ties.

In theory, Japan and South Korea have much in common. They are prosperous democracies and American allies in a fraught region. Yet Mr Abe’s own visit to Yasukuni last year and his belief that Japan does not need to apologise for the past, combined with a hypernationalist press in South Korea, inhibits rapprochement. Nonetheless, in late March President Park Geun-hye agreed to a meeting with Mr Abe in the presence of Mr Obama in The Hague. Ms Park says that to demonstrate goodwill, Japan must make clear that it will not reopen issues of history, while showing sincerity on the issue of those whom the Japanese refer to as “comfort women”, who were duped or forced to perform sexual services for the Japanese armed forces in the second world war.

On both counts, Japan appears to have passed the South Korean president’s test. Mr Abe recently made it clear that he stands by Japan’s previous expressions of remorse for the war and towards comfort women in particular. On April 16th senior diplomats from both sides met in Seoul to discuss how Japan could more fully make amends. Some 55 Korean former comfort women survive. Both individual apologies and compensation are at issue (though Japan has offered both before).

Regular monthly meetings between the two sides are now planned. In order for them to remain low-key, Japan has sought—and received—reassurances that the South Korean government will no longer inflame matters by openly endorsing anti-Japan protests in South Korea or anti-Japan grandstanding by third countries such as China. Both sides also want to find ways to kick their territorial dispute—Japan claims the Korean island of Dokdo, which it calls Takeshima—into the long grass.

They have reason to co-operate. The 50th anniversary of the two countries’ friendship treaty looms in June 2015. It would be a diplomatic disaster if they had nothing to celebrate, especially for Ms Park—it was her father, Park Chung-hee, South Korea’s former dictator, who signed the treaty. If things go well in the coming months, Ms Park might even extend an invitation to Japan’s emperor, Akihito.

China’s dispute with Japan seems less tractable. China has challenged Japan’s control over the Senkaku islands (which China calls the Diaoyus), even though they have been part of the Japanese realm for over a century. China’s declaration of an “air-defence identification zone” over the East China Sea in November seemed further to suggest that it was out to challenge the status quo in the region.

Recently, though, China’s leaders have quietly peddled a softer line. Japanese officials report noticeably fewer incursions by Chinese coastguard vessels in recent weeks. On the diplomatic front, earlier this month an informal Chinese emissary, Hu Deping, son of a late reformist leader, Hu Yaobang, and a close friend of the Communist Party’s general secretary, Xi Jinping, came to Tokyo. He did not just meet former Japanese prime ministers and the foreign minister. In secret, he also met Mr Abe.

Crucial signals from China will come in early May, when an all-party group of Japanese parliamentarians heads to Beijing. Last year the trip was cancelled when the group was told no high Communist Party officials would meet it. This year, one of its members, Katsuya Okada, a former foreign minister, is optimistic. He says the group may meet China’s foreign minister, Wang Yi, or even the prime minister, Li Keqiang. Whoever is wheeled out, Mr Okada says, will say much about China’s intentions.

As for the thorny problem of North Korea, Mongolia recently brokered an official meeting, the first in years, between North Korean and Japanese officials. North Korea’s desire to get closer to Japan may partly be because of alarm that its sponsor, China, appears to be getting on famously with South Korea. But it is chiefly because of a need for cash.

The chief topic of the talks is the fate of Japanese citizens abducted by the rogue state in the 1970s and 1980s. The Japanese government believes that of 17 officially recognised abductees, a number may still be alive. It wants a proper accounting. In return, it may ease commercial sanctions.

Being seen to improve relations with North Korea carries political risks in Japan. But Mr Abe’s hardline credentials will stand him in good stead. He longs to claim a breakthrough over the abductees, and may seek progress even if North Korea conducts a fourth nuclear test.

The prognosis for better relations extends to other countries, too. Opinion polls suggest a majority of South Koreans want better relations with Japan. Scope for their government, and China’s, to pursue that depends in part on Japan’s leader. Mr Abe the private man is a nationalist ideologue who harbours weirdly revisionist views about Japan’s past. But Mr Abe the prime minister is a pragmatic internationalist who understands that pushing his private ideology is not always in Japan’s interest. Mr Abe did not visit Yasukuni during this spring’s rituals. So long as the prime minister remains ascendant over the private man the thaw may continue.

# Japan's pacifist constitution

### Keeping the peace

May 14th 2014, 1:48 by D.McN. | TOKYO

FOR a document cobbled together during a few hectic days in 1946, in bombed-out Tokyo, Japan’s constitution has weathered the test of time. Written during the American-led occupation, while thousands of starving, war-displaced citizens wandered the capital, the constitution has since remained untouched. That, for Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, is a problem.  
  
Conservatives have long resented the May 1947 constitution, which enshrines Western-style rights and officially ended the god-like status of the emperor, reducing him to a mere “symbol of the state”. In particular, Article 9, in which Japanese people “forever” renounce war as a “sovereign right” and also renounce “the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes” rankles Mr Abe’s supporters. Debates about the constitution have grown more heated with China’s rise. In a critical review this year, Japan’s government said China’s military budget has grown thirtyfold over the last decade; by contrast Japan’s military spending has been more or less flat for 20 years. China’s publicly-announced annual spending is twice that of Japan, says its defence ministry.

Mr Abe’s government argues that Japan should be permitted to engage in “collective defence,” so that it can fight alongside a military ally—America—if that ally comes under attack. Until now, legal experts have interpreted the constitution as allowing Japan’s military to open fire only if directly fired upon. The government’s “reinterpretation” is the most profound challenge to the pacifist constitution since 1947.

Mr Abe faces, however, one serious roadblock: the constitution’s popularity. Many ordinary Japanese support Article 9, which they credit with keeping the country out of war for 68 years. An opinion poll last month in the liberal-left Asahi newspaper found 63 percent of respondents oppose Mr Abe’s plans for Article 9. Even readers of the conservative Nikkei have serious doubts.

Opposition has taken some novel forms. One group of campaigners has launched a sex strike. [Women Who Don’t Have Sex With Men Who Love War](https://twitter.com/sexstrikejapan) has vowed to withhold the marital prerogative from any husband backing constitutional revision. A potentially greater challenge has emerged from the Norwegian Nobel committee, which last month shortlisted “Japanese people who conserve Article 9” for its peace prize.  
  
The quest for Nobel recognition was launched last year by a Japanese mother-of-two, Naomi Takasu. Michio Hamaji, a former Middle-East oil executive, lent his support, drawing on his business and political connections. A supporter of Mr Abe in “general terms,” Mr Hamaji is nevertheless alarmed by the threat of war with China. He has been joined by Hiroyuki Konishi, a Diet lawmaker who says the government’s attempt to reinterpret the constitution’s legal basis is effectively a “coup d’état”.  
  
The Oslo-based committee has a history of eccentric choices. And among this year’s confirmed candidates are Edward Snowden and Vladimir Putin. But Mr Konishi believes the Article 9 bid, quixotic as it sounds, has a chance of success. “Its simplicity and elegance is the reason why it has survived for so long,” he says. “I believe the world should recognise that.” He and Mr Hamaji hope to enlist the support of 50 lawmakers ahead of the Nobel announcement in November. If their bid were to succeed, one of the more interesting questions would be who goes to Norway to receive the award on behalf of “the Japanese people”—Mr Abe?

# Japan Moves to Scale Back Postwar Restrictions on the Use of Military Power

By [MARTIN FACKLER](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/f/martin_fackler/index.html)MAY 15, 2014

Photo



Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Thursday said a stronger military would allow Japan to contribute to stability in the region. Credit Toru Hanai/Reuters

PUSAN, South Korea — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe may be about to take one of his biggest steps yet to nudge Japan away from its postwar pacifism after a government advisory panel recommended Thursday that constitutional restrictions on the military be eased to allow Japanese forces to come to the aid of allied nations under attack.

The panel, which was appointed by the Abe government, called on Japan to adopt a new legal interpretation of its war-renouncing Constitution that would permit an expanded role for its military, the Self-Defense Forces. Those forces have been strictly limited to protecting Japan’s own territory and people since they were created soon after World War II.

The reinterpretation would allow Japanese armed forces to act in limited cases even when Japan is not at risk, such as by shooting down a North Korean missile headed toward the United States, something it cannot legally do now. The proposed change would also allow Japanese forces to play a larger role in United Nations peacekeeping operations, the panel said. Though Japan has sent troops to peacekeeping operations since 1992, they act under severe constraints.

If accepted, it would represent a fundamental shift in the stance of Japan’s military.

While Mr. Abe immediately voiced his support, the recommendations will now be debated within his governing coalition, where they face opposition from a small Buddhist party. That makes it unclear whether the proposals would be watered down before they could be adopted by the cabinet.

Polls have also shown broad opposition in Japan, with many people concerned that the nationalistic Mr. Abe could use the proposed changes as a step toward dismantling Japan’s postwar Constitution and its rejection of war.

“This will stretch Article 9 beyond reasonable and logical limits,” said Koichi Nakano, a political scientist at Sophia University in Tokyo, referring to the part of the Constitution that renounces war as a means of resolving disputes. “A lot of us are worried because this will not only negate Article 9, but the Constitution itself.”

Mr. Abe said the changes were needed to enable Japan to respond to an increasingly assertive China and a nuclear-armed North Korea by building closer security ties with the United States and forming military alliances with democratic nations like Australia and India. He also rejected criticism that the changes would drag Japan into conflict.

In a televised speech, Mr. Abe also said that a stronger military would help ensure the peace by allowing Japan to defend itself, and contribute to regional stability, a doctrine that he has called “proactive pacifism.”

“There is a misunderstanding that Japan will once again become a country that wages war, but I absolutely reject this,” he said. “I will protect the principle of pacifism in the Constitution. By increasing our deterrence, our country will be able to avoid becoming caught up in war.”

The proposal follows steps by Mr. Abe that supporters say aim to bolster Japan’s security posture, but that critics say are also increasing the strength of the national government, something many Japanese have been wary of since their disastrous experience with military-led authoritarianism in World War II.

Since taking office in December 2012, Mr. Abe has pushed through an unpopular law to strengthen control of state secrets, created an American-style National Security Council and [lifted Japan’s self-imposed restrictions on exporting weapons](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/02/world/asia/japan-ends-half-century-ban-on-weapons-exports.html). In Europe this month, Mr. Abe agreed with the leaders of France and Britain to develop military equipment jointly.

A reinterpretation of the Constitution would go much further, allowing Japanese forces to act more like a “normal” military. To do this, the panel of academics called for embracing a legal concept called “collective self-defense” that views protecting an ally as an act of self-defense, which they said is permitted under the current Constitution.

Political experts also said Mr. Abe may see collective self-defense as a way of preparing the public for scrapping Japan’s pacifist Constitution, which he calls an outdated document written by postwar American occupiers. But with polls showing public opinion firmly against altering the Constitution, experts said Mr. Abe had appeared to settle, at least for now, on reinterpreting it.

“He is looking for a less time-consuming way,” Dr. Nakano said. “But it raises questions when the government of the day can change the Constitution simply by issuing a new interpretation.”

# Japan: Ask Not What America Will Do for You…

Beyond reinterpreting the Constitution, Japan needs to do more to provide for its own defense.

By Robert Dujarric

May 19, 2014

Discussions with Japanese officials and analysts indicate that U.S. President Barack Obama’s public assertion that the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands are [covered by U.S. obligations](http://thediplomat.com/2014/04/obama-senkakus-covered-under-us-japan-security-treaty/" \t "_blank) to Japan has failed to dent Tokyo’s doubts about America’s credibility as its protector against China.

Some angst is unavoidable. A variety of factors guarantee with near certainty that the U.S. will fight China if it attacks Japan, but question marks will always remain. And even if the U.S. commitment is watertight today, no one can predict what the future holds.

Washington’s about-face over Syria led many to downgrade the value of American lines in the sand. Syria, unlike Japan and Korea, is not and has never been a U.S. core interest. It’s unclear how American goals would be served by the replacement of the Assad tyranny with an Al-Qaeda theocracy. To his credit, Obama realized his mistake before it was too late. This spared the U.S. and Japan an Iraq-type crusade that would have drained American resources away from East Asia. Nevertheless, Obama’s inability to grasp these facts from the start damaged American standing. Ukraine is also mentioned as an example of American weakness. But in this case, the U.S. never put the military option on the table. Additionally, most European NATO nations have so far made it clear that they will abstain from serious sanctions, limiting U.S. options.

There are steps that Washington could take to reassure Tokyo. The most sensational would be to station U.S. Marines on the disputed islands. Like the Berlin Brigade (U.S. Army units stationed in West Berlin), this would create a tripwire against Chinese invasion. But at this point, even hawkish Japanese leaders would oppose such a deployment.

The United States could also increase dramatically the size and capabilities of its forward-deployed assets in Japan, but this would entail significant financial costs.

Another option, which is in the hands of Japanese rather than American citizens, would be to boost the power of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (SDF). Though on paper China has a bigger GDP, Japan’s military potential compares well. It is technologically more advanced, has a more stable political system, and doesn’t need to devote massive armed manpower to internal security. Thanks to the U.S. alliance and close relations with U.S. partners, it has access to the world’s best arsenals when purchasing weaponry. Japan would still require extended deterrence from Washington, but its level of dependence on the U.S. would decline.

Under this scenario, Japan would provide a greater share of its own security. Concerns about the willingness of Americans to fight for Japan would diminish as the percentage of “made-in-U.S.A components” of Japan’s defense would get smaller.

There are, however, a host of reasons why this is unlikely to happen. First and foremost, Japan is a democracy whose voters dislike military spending. Moreover, the Abe Cabinet refuses to make a massive and electorally very risky investment of political capital to try to change this. Instead, it has focused on non-security issues and on financially costless new [interpretations of constitutional texts](http://thediplomat.com/2014/05/recommendations-for-the-future-balance-of-u-s-japan-relations/" \t "_blank) whose impact on national defense may turn out to be negligible.

In his inaugural address in 1961, President John F. Kennedy (father of the current American ambassador to Japan, Caroline Kennedy), [offered](http://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/Ready-Reference/JFK-Quotations/Inaugural-Address.aspx" \t "_blank) this advice: “My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.”

If the situation were reversed – if the U.S. depended on Japanese deterrence – American leaders would probably also focus mostly on minimizing America’s own efforts and rely as much as possible on their stronger ally. But this doesn’t alter the current situation: the Japanese cabinet’s barely hidden contempt for the American chief executive coexists with a “what will Obama do for us?” mentality. If the premier and his associates emphasized “what can we do for our country?”, misgivings about the president would not diminish but they would cause them far less heartburn.

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# NYT

# Chinese Flybys Alarm Japan as Tensions Escalate

By [MARTIN FACKLER](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/f/martin_fackler/index.html)MAY 25, 2014

TOKYO — In an ominous display of growing territorial tensions between China and Japan, the Japanese Defense Ministry said Sunday that Chinese jet fighters had flown dangerously close to two of its reconnaissance planes in overlapping air defense zones claimed by both nations.

The ministry described two episodes that took place on Saturday in airspace over the East China Sea that both countries [claim](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/11/27/world/asia/overlapping-airspace-claims.html?ref=asia) as “air defense identification zones,” areas bordering their sovereign airspace in which they require foreign aircraft to identify themselves and provide flight plans.

Japan has routinely ignored the Chinese air defense zone since Beijing [declared](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/24/world/asia/china-warns-of-action-against-aircraft-over-disputed-seas.html) it late last year. China had also not pushed its new air zone, apparently backing off after the United States [immediately challenged](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/27/world/asia/us-flies-b-52s-into-chinas-expanded-air-defense-zone.html) the Chinese claim by sending a pair of unarmed B-52 heavy bombers to fly through the airspace without incident.

[[](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/25/world/asia/chinas-leader-seeking-to-build-its-muscle-pushes-overhaul-of-the-military.html)](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/25/world/asia/chinas-leader-seeking-to-build-its-muscle-pushes-overhaul-of-the-military.html)

## [China’s Leader, Seeking to Build Its Muscle, Pushes Overhaul of the MilitaryMAY 24, 2014](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/25/world/asia/chinas-leader-seeking-to-build-its-muscle-pushes-overhaul-of-the-military.html)

The Chinese stance toward at least Japanese military flights appeared to change on Saturday, when a pair of Chinese Su-27 fighters flew within 100 feet of a Japanese YS-11 propeller-driven reconnaissance plane. Earlier in the day, another pair of Chinese fighters flew within 150 feet of a Japanese P-3C, another type of propeller-driven reconnaissance plane, the ministry said.

It said the Chinese fighters took no other measures against the Japanese planes, which returned to base safely.

The flybys appeared to signal a dangerous escalation in a game of nerves between the two Asian powers for effective control of the East China Sea, including a group of uninhabited islands administered by Japan but also claimed by China. The nations’ Coast Guards regularly play high-seas games of cat and mouse around the disputed islands, with Chinese ships entering or approaching Japanese-claimed waters about once or twice a week. There have also been a growing number of episodes involving aircraft, whose greater speeds mean a higher chance of an accident or of miscalculation quickly spiraling out of control into a full-blown military confrontation. Speaking to reporters, the Japanese defense minister, Itsunori Onodera, called the close approaches by Chinese fighters a dangerous act that heightened tensions.

“We received a report from the crews that the fighter planes were armed with missiles,” Mr. Onodera said, referring to the Japanese aircrews. “The crews were on edge as they responded.”

The Chinese Ministry of National Defense confirmed on Sunday that the Chinese military jets had approached the Japanese planes, but, in a [statement](http://news.mod.gov.cn/headlines/2014-05/25/content_4511503.htm) on its website, it defended the action as a legitimate enforcement of Beijing’s air defense zone. The ministry accused the Japanese aircraft of interfering in Chinese-Russian military exercises in the area. “Chinese military aircraft have the right to maintain air safety, and to take the necessary identification and prevention measures against foreign aircraft that enter the airspace of China’s air defense identification zone over the East China Sea,” the ministry said.

It warned Japan to “halt all surveillance and interference” over the area declared for the Chinese-Russian military exercises. “Otherwise, all the possible repercussions will be borne by Japan,” the ministry said.

Japan’s Defense Ministry said that the surge in the number of intercepts of Chinese aircraft began in 2010, after the Japanese Coast Guard arrested a Chinese trawler captain near the disputed islands, known as the Senkaku in Japan and the Diaoyu in China. That, and Japan’s purchase of three of the five islands two years ago, brought angry reactions from China. Beijing has responded by making increasingly assertive claims over the islands and other parts of the East China Sea, sending its ships and planes in or near Japanese-claimed areas in what some analysts have described as a long-term effort to wear down Japan’s resolve.

Because Japan is the only Asian nation that is widely seen as able to match China’s military abilities, American officials and defense analysts have increasingly warned of the dangers of an unintended clash in the East China Sea expanding into a wider confrontation that could drag in the United States, which has a defense treaty with Japan.

On Sunday, Mr. Onodera, the Japanese defense minister, said that Japan had lodged a protest with China over the close approaches by the fighters. “These approaches were meant to intimidate, and were not actions that would normally be taken,” he said.

NYT

# Japan Protests Chinese Flybys Over East China Sea

By [MARTIN FACKLER](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/f/martin_fackler/index.html)JUNE 11, 2014

TOKYO — Japan protested to Beijing on Wednesday after Chinese fighter jets flew within 100 feet of Japanese military planes in airspace claimed by both nations. Similar flybys in the same area took place several weeks ago.

In two separate episodes on Wednesday morning, Chinese Su-27 fighters flew dangerously close to two Japanese propeller-driven reconnaissance airplanes in skies over the East China Sea, Japan’s Defense Ministry said.

The flybys are the latest escalation in an increasingly tense test of wills between China and Japan for dominance of the East China Sea, which includes a group of uninhabited islets that both nations claim. Japan took control of the island group when it was a rising imperial power in the late 19th century, but now a newly resurgent China wants to regain what it sees as stolen territory.

[Continue reading the main story](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/12/world/asia/japan-protests-chinese-flybys-over-east-china-sea.html?action=click&contentCollection=Politics&region=Footer&module=Recommendation&src=recg&pgtype=article#story-continues-2)

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The ministry said the Japanese planes had returned safely to base, though the faster Chinese jets came close enough that the crew of one Japanese craft photographed what appeared to be white missiles on the underside of the jets.

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## [Map: Territorial Disputes in the Waters Near China](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/02/25/world/asia/claims-south-china-sea.html)

A similar encounter took place late last month, when Chinese fighter planes flew as close as 100 feet to Japanese reconnaissance planes in the same area.

Japan’s Defense Ministry said the incidents had taken place in airspace where both nations claim overlapping “air defense identification zones” —areas bordering sovereign airspace where foreign aircraft were required to identify themselves and to provide flight plans. Japan has ignored the Chinese air zone since Beijing declared it late last year.

Analysts have said the flybys could be a sign that China has begun trying to enforce its air zone. However, they warn that the high-speed flybys carry the risk of an accident or miscalculation that could spiral out of control, causing a larger confrontation.

They point to a 2001 accident in which an American reconnaissance plane collided with a Chinese jet over the South China Sea, briefly provoking a tense standoff that was eventually defused by negotiations. With the leaders of China and Japan now barely on speaking terms, analysts said such an incident between the two Asian nations could potentially escalate into a full-blown military clash that may even involve the United States, which is bound by treaty to defend Japan.

Speaking to reporters, the Japanese defense minister, Itsunori Onodera, called the flybys “an extremely dangerous action by fighter planes against aircraft engaged in normal reconnaissance operations over international waters.”

“We have lodged a stern protest to the Chinese side, via diplomatic channels,” he said.

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# China’s Quest to Isolate Japan May Backfire

## by [Bonnie S. Glaser](http://cogitasia.com/author/bonnie-glaser/) • April 4, 2014 • [1 Comment](http://cogitasia.com/chinas-quest-to-isolate-japan-may-backfire/#comments)

**By Bonnie Glaser & Jacqueline Vitello**

[](http://cogitasia.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/7774049918_9e417fd276_c.jpg_800.jpg)

PLA Navy destroyer rendering honors. China has excluded Japan from participating in an international fleet review commemorating the 65th anniversary of the PLA Navy’s establishment. Source: Israel Defense Force’s flickr photostream, used under a creative commons license.

Beijing has upped the ante in its dispute with Tokyo by launching an intensive campaign to ostracize Japan in the international community.

In late April, China will host in Qingdao the Western Pacific Naval Symposium and an international fleet review to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the Chinese navy. To demonstrate its ire toward Japan, presumably over its handling of the territorial dispute in the East China Sea and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s visit last December to the controversial Yasukuni shrine, Beijing plans to [exclude Japan’s](http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/kyodo-news-international/140330/china-exclude-japan-international-fleet-review-qingdao) Maritime Self-Defense Force from the international fleet review, which will be attended by the chiefs of naval forces from more than 20 countries. In response to this intentional snub, Japan’s longtime ally the United States has opted out of the exercise as well, and other nations could soon follow suit. If enough countries boycott the event, perhaps Beijing will recognize that its efforts to marginalize Japan in the international community are not working, and may actually be counterproductive.

China’s crusade to isolate Japan internationally began in earnest earlier this year, when more than 30 Chinese ambassadors published commentaries accusing Japan of returning to militarist policies. More recently, on his recent trip to Germany, President Xi requested to make an official visit to several Holocaust memorial sites, including the famous Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, in a thinly veiled effort to contrast Germany, which atoned for its sins in World War II, and Japan, which allegedly has not “properly” apologized for its wartime aggressions against China.

Diplomats in many capitals around the world have received a Chinese demarche regarding Japan’s alleged “revival of militarism.” As part of this diplomatic drive, Chinese officials cite Japan’s decision to raise its military budget, which in 2014 will amount to a 2.2 percent increase. This incremental increase is miniscule compared to China’s 12.2 percent increase in its 2014 military budget. Moreover, this is [the first significant increase](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_budget/index.html) in Japan’s defense expenditures in more than a decade; whereas China’s military spending has seen double digit increases annually over the same period.

Beijing evidently hopes that by isolating Japan and vilifying Abe it can gain the upper hand in China’s test of wills with Japan. This includes the contested Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea, which are under Japan’s administrative control. China seeks to compel Tokyo to admit that a sovereignty dispute exists and, on that basis, negotiate confidence building measures that would apply to the waters and air space in the East China Sea, in which China declared an air defense identification zone last November.

A brief examination of the responses of various countries suggests that China’s “isolate Japan” campaign is not working, and indeed may backfire.  Australia’s Prime Minister Tony Abbott has called Japan “Australia’s best friend in Asia” and a “strong ally.” Angela Merkel’s government opted to steer clear of the fray and [declined Chinese requests](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2014/03/28/this-is-why-germany-doesnt-want-china-anywhere-near-berlins-holocaust-memorial/) to include Holocaust memorial sites on Xi’s itinerary. China was therefore not only unable to draw attention to its cause, but was also indirectly snubbed by its most important European trading partner. The relationship between Tokyo and New Delhi is also being strengthened significantly, in part due to shared anxieties about the rise of China.

China’s behavior in the region has also bolstered U.S.-Japan defense cooperation. The two countries are jointly revising the U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines, which will serve to strengthen the bilateral relationship. Beijing’s attempt to drive a wedge between Washington and Tokyo has failed miserably. In addition, China’s parallel crusades in the East and [South China Seas](http://cogitasia.com/beijings-south-china-sea-strategies-consolidation-and-provocation/" \t "_blank) have forged stronger alliances between Japan and its Southeast Asian neighbors. The Philippines, which seeks to formally strengthen its claim to territory in the South China Sea before an international tribunal, has welcomed Japan’s support and assistance to enhance its maritime surveillance capacity. Vietnam has likewise bolstered ties with Tokyo in a bid to win partners in its sovereignty battle against Beijing. Rather than isolating Tokyo, Beijing has handed Japan new and stronger partnerships.

China’s symbolic anti-Japanese antics are clearly ineffectual. Instead of whipping up anti-Japanese sentiment at home and abroad, Beijing should seek ways to de-escalate Sino-Japanese tensions and find common ground with Tokyo in building a peaceful and prosperous future. In a gesture of goodwill symbolizing the oft-quoted “peaceful rise,” the Chinese could start down a path of better relations by extending Japan an invitation to the upcoming international fleet review.

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# Can Asia prevent its own Crimea?

## by [Bonnie S. Glaser](http://cogitasia.com/author/bonnie-glaser/) • March 28, 2014 • [2 Comments](http://cogitasia.com/can-asia-prevent-its-own-crimea/#comments)

**By Bonnie Glaser & Ely Ratner**

[](http://www.flickr.com/photos/televiseus/3094722229/)

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With the world **[watching Ukraine](http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2014/03/25/putin-trapped-by-history/" \t "_blank)** with wary eyes, the U.S. Navy’s lead admiral in the Pacific **[suggested](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/admiral-harry-harris/crimea-pacific-_b_5000979.html" \t "_blank)** Asia could face a similar crisis if the continent’s other major power continues on its current path.

Since 2009, China has stepped up what Philippine officials have called a “**[creeping invasion](http://globalnation.inquirer.net/35543/scarborough-will-not-be-mischief-reef-redux" \t "_blank)**” in the South China Sea. Although less dramatic than Russia’s annexation of Crimea, Beijing has been bullying its neighbors to assert and advance an expansive set of territorial and maritime claims encompassed by its “**[nine-dash line](http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2014/02/06-us-china-nine-dash-line-bader" \t "_blank)**,” which skirts the coastlines of Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and the Philippines and gobbles up islands, rocks and resources in the process.

Seeking to make new facts on the ground (or, more literally, on the water), Beijing has permitted and encouraged its paramilitary law enforcement ships and navy to **[engage in persistent harassment](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/24/us-philippines-southchinasea-idUSBREA1N0F820140224" \t "_blank)** and intimidation of non-Chinese fisherman, military vessels and energy companies seeking to go about their business in the South China Sea. Earlier this month, Chinese coast guard vessels **[reportedly interfered](http://www.imoa.ph/tag/second-thomas-shoal/" \t "_blank)** with the delivery of supplies to Filipino marines stationed on Second Thomas Shoal, a submerged reef near Reed Bank that is believed to be rich in oil and gas. If such incidents are allowed to continue, armed conflict could be around the corner.

But what distinguishes the contest over sovereignty in the Asia-Pacific from events unfolding more than 5,000 miles away in Eastern Europe is that hope remains for a peaceful solution that eschews coercion and force in exchange for international law and diplomacy.

Outmatched by China’s rapidly growing military, and dispirited by 17 years of failed bilateral diplomacy to settle its disputes with Beijing, the Philippines decided in January 2013 that its only recourse was to **[submit its claims](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jan/22/philippines-south-china-sea-beijing" \t "_blank)** to compulsory arbitration under the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, which governs international rules and rights on the world’s seas. This came on the heels of China’s illegal seizure and occupation (continued to this day) of the contested Scarborough Shoal off of the Philippines’ west coast.

Despite Beijing’s unrelenting efforts to pressure Manila to drop the case, the Philippines plans to file its final “memorial” at the end of March, which will detail its case that many of China’s claims, including the notorious “nine-dash line,” have no standing in international or customary law. Legal experts predict a ruling could come down as early as mid- or late 2015.

In the meantime, countries in the Asia-Pacific – and the international community – have an opportunity to decide what kind of world they want to live in: one governed by rules and institutions; the other by brute force.

The underlying problem, however, is that many governments are reluctant to publicly support a process that Beijing opposes.  
In February last year, China **[formally rejected](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-02/19/content_16238133.htm" \t "_blank)** the proceedings, arguing that the Philippines case is “factually flawed” and “contains false accusations.” To date, China has sought to undermine the legitimacy of the tribunal by failing to file its own legal case and exercise its right to appoint members to the arbitration panel. Nevertheless, China’s refusal to participate will not prevent the arbitration from proceeding or subvert the binding nature of the judgment. If Beijing ignores the tribunal’s ruling – assuming that its judges find they have jurisdiction and subsequently rule in Manila’s favor – China will be in clear violation of its international legal obligations.

It is incumbent upon leaders in Canberra, Paris, Berlin, Jakarta and elsewhere to say as much.

Now is the time for like-minded countries to take a public stance on this issue. If more countries – including leading European nations, Australia and especially some of the ASEAN countries – speak out in favor of the right to use arbitration to resolve maritime disputes (while not siding with Manila), then the reputational cost to China of flouting international law will increase. Beijing may then be compelled to rethink its current position of defiance. It may even avail itself of the opportunity to participate in the tribunal and present a legal defense of its claims, including the nine-dash line.

The low profile taken by states both nearby and far away is to some extent understandable. Their economic dependence on China is growing. What is to be gained by risking Beijing’s ire, which in the Philippines case has resulted in flagrant Chinese diplomatic, economic, and other forms of pressure?

But waiting quietly for the ruling is a losing strategy. If there are no penalties for defying a binding ruling of an international court, then China will assuredly ignore any decisions it dislikes, further destabilizing the region and closing off a potentially promising path for the peaceful management of otherwise noxious disputes. The disruptive consequences would also likely reverberate beyond the region, as China’s willingness to play a constructive and positive role in the international system would be rightfully called into question.

If Asia wishes to prevent events in its own neighborhood that mirror those unfolding today in the Ukraine, it must seize this remarkably clear-cut opportunity to support the development of a rules-based system in Asia. Staying silent on the Philippines arbitration case is a tacit vote against such a future.

NYT

# The Inconvenient Truth Behind the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands

By [HAN-YI SHAW](http://kristof.blogs.nytimes.com/author/han-yi-shaw/)

September 19, 2012 7:38 pmOctober 9, 2012 2:39 pm

Han-yi ShawDiaoyu Island is recorded under Kavalan, Taiwan in Revised Gazetteer of Fujian Province (1871).

I’ve had a longstanding interest in the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, the subject of a dangerous territorial dispute  between Japan and China. The United States claims to be neutral but in effect is siding with Japan, and we could be drawn in if a war ever arose. Let me clear that I deplore the violence in the recent anti-Japan protests in China:  the violence is reprehensible and makes China look like an irrational bully. China’s government should rein in this volatile nationalism rather than feed it. This is a dispute that both sides should refer to the International Court of Justice, rather than allow to boil over in the streets. That said, when I look at the underlying question of who has the best claim, I’m sympathetic to China’s position. I don’t think it is 100 percent clear, partly because China seemed to acquiesce to Japanese sovereignty between 1945 and 1970, but on balance I find the evidence for Chinese sovereignty quite compelling. The most interesting evidence is emerging from old Japanese government documents and suggests that Japan in effect stole the islands from China in 1895 as booty of war. This article by Han-Yi Shaw, a scholar from Taiwan, explores those documents. I invite any Japanese scholars to make the contrary legal case. – Nicholas Kristof

Japan’s recent purchase of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands has predictably reignited tensions amongst China, Japan, and Taiwan. Three months ago, when Niwa Uichiro, the Japanese ambassador to China, [warned that Japan’s purchase of the islands could spark an “extremely grave crisis”](http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/af98fc54-aef7-11e1-a4e0-00144feabdc0.html) between China and Japan, Tokyo Governor [Ishihara Shintaro slammed Niwa as an unqualified ambassador](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201206090024), who “needs to learn more about the history of his own country”.

Ambassador Niwa was forced to apologize for his remarks and was recently replaced. But what is most alarming amid these developments is that despite Japan’s democratic and pluralist society, rising nationalist sentiments are sidelining moderate views and preventing rational dialogue.

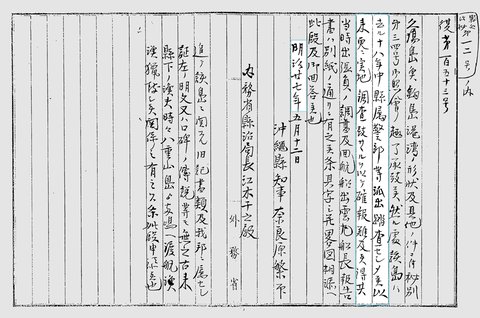
The Japanese government maintains that the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands are Japanese territory under international law and historical point of view and has [repeatedly insisted that no dispute exists](http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20120910-703978.html). Despite that the rest of the world sees a major dispute, the Japanese government continues to evade important historical facts behind its unlawful incorporation of the islands in 1895.  
  
Specifically, the Japanese government asserts, “From 1885 on, our government conducted on-site surveys time and again, which confirmed that the islands were uninhabited and there were no signs of control by the Qing Empire.”

My research of over 40 official Meiji period documents unearthed from the Japanese National Archives, Diplomatic Records Office, and National Institute for Defense Studies Library clearly demonstrates that the Meiji government acknowledged Chinese ownership of the islands back in 1885.

Following the first on-site survey, in 1885, the Japanese foreign minister wrote, “Chinese newspapers have been reporting rumors of our intention of occupying islands belonging to China located next to Taiwan.… At this time, if we were to publicly place national markers, this must necessarily invite China’s suspicion.…”

In November 1885, the Okinawa governor confirmed “since this matter is not unrelated to China, if problems do arise I would be in grave repentance for my responsibility”.

“Surveys of the islands are incomplete” wrote the new Okinawa governor in January of 1892. He requested that a naval ship Kaimon be sent to survey the islands, but ultimately a combination of miscommunication and bad weather made it impossible for the survey to take place.

Japan Diplomatic Records Office.Letter dated May 12, 1894 affirming that the Meiji government did not repeatedly investigate the disputed islands.

“Ever since the islands were investigated by Okinawa police agencies back in 1885, there have been no subsequent field surveys conducted,” the Okinawa governor wrote in 1894.

After a number of Chinese defeats in the Sino-Japanese War, a report from Japan’s Home Ministry said “this matter involved negotiations with China… but the situation today is greatly different from back then.” The Meiji government, following a cabinet decision in early 1895, promptly incorporated the islands.

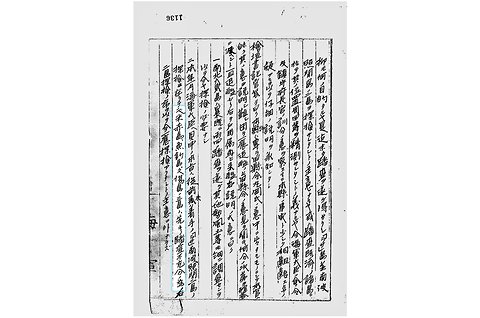
Negotiations with China never took place and this decision was passed during the Sino-Japanese War. It was never made public.

In his biography Koga Tatsushiro, the first Japanese citizen to lease the islands from the Meiji government, attributed Japan’s possession of the islands to “the gallant military victory of our Imperial forces.”

Collectively, these official documents leave no doubt that the Meiji government did not base its occupation of the islands following “on-site surveys time and again,” but instead annexed them as booty of war. This is the inconvenient truth that the Japanese government has conveniently evaded.

Japan asserts that neither Beijing nor Taipei objected to U.S. administration after WWII. That’s true, but what Japan does not mention is that neither Beijing nor Taipei were invited as signatories of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951, from which the U.S. derived administrative rights.

When Japan annexed the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in 1895, it detached them from Taiwan and placed them under Okinawa Prefecture. Moreover, the Japanese name “Senkaku Islands” itself was first introduced in 1900 by academic Kuroiwa Hisashi and adopted by the Japanese government thereafter. Half a century later when Japan returned Taiwan to China, both sides adopted the 1945 administrative arrangement of Taiwan, with the Chinese unaware that the uninhabited “Senkaku Islands” were in fact the former Diaoyu Islands. This explains the belated protest from Taipei and Beijing over U.S. administration of the islands after the war.

Report dated August 12, 1892 from navy commander affirming the islands were not fully investigated. Source:  Library of The National Institute for Defense Studies.

The Japanese government frequently cites two documents as evidence that China did not consider the islands to be Chinese. The first is an official letter from a Chinese consul in Nagasaki dated May 20, 1920 that listed the islands as Japanese territory.

Neither Beijing nor Taipei dispute that the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands — along with the entire island of Taiwan — were formally under Japanese occupation at the time. However, per post-WW II arrangements, Japan was required to surrender territories obtained from aggression and revert them to their pre-1895 legal status.

The second piece evidence is a Chinese map from 1958 that excludes the Senkaku Islands from Chinese territory. But the Japanese government’s partial unveiling leaves out important information from the map’s colophon: “certain national boundaries are based on maps compiled prior to the Second Sino-Japanese War(1937-1945).”

Qing period (1644-1911) records substantiate Chinese ownership of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands prior to 1895. Envoy documents indicate that the islands reside inside the “border that separates Chinese and foreign lands.” And according to Taiwan gazetteers, “Diaoyu Island accommodates ten or more large ships” under the jurisdiction of Kavalan, Taiwan.

The right to know is the bedrock of every democracy. The Japanese public deserves to know the other side of the story. It is the politicians who flame public sentiments under the name of national interests who pose the greatest risk, not the islands themselves.

Update: The author would like to include an updated image of the Qing era documents that recorded, “Diaoyutai Island accommodates ten or more large ships”, as mentioned in his blog post.

National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan.Record of Missions to Taiwan Waters (1722), Gazetteer of Kavalan County (1852), and Pictorial Treatise of Taiwan Proper (1872).

Han-Yi Shaw is a Research Fellow at the Research Center for International Legal Studies, National Chengchi University, in Taipei, Taiwan.

# The Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands: A Japanese Scholar Responds

By [TAKAYUKI NISHI](http://kristof.blogs.nytimes.com/author/takayuki-nishi/)

October 4, 2012 2:32 pmOctober 11, 2012 12:45 pm

I recently posted a [*commentary by Han-Yi Shaw*](http://kristof.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/19/the-inconvenient-truth-behind-the-diaoyusenkaku-islands/), a scholar from Taiwan, arguing that Japan in effect stole the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands from China in 1895 as the spoils of war. I invited Japanese scholars to make the opposing case, and I am happy to post a response from Takayuki Nishi, a Project Assistant Professor at the Global Center for Asian and Regional Research at University of Shizuoka, in Shizuoka, Japan.. As always, I welcome your comments and feedback. – Nicholas Kristof

The People’s Republic of China’s claim that the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands are an “inherent territory” of China contradicts its own demands before 1970.

Before 1970, the People’s Republic of China did not merely acquiesce to Japanese sovereignty over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. China demanded self-determination for the U.S.-administered Ryukyu Islands, with an option of return to Japanese administration, while specifically including the “Senkaku Islands”. Thus, China agreed with the United States and Japan that, in the event of the Ryukyu Islands’ return to Japanese administration, the United States should also return the Senkaku Islands to Japan.  
  
The common law doctrine of estoppel prevents a party from gaining by making an allegation or denial that contradicts what the party has previously stated as a fact.

According to Article 38 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice, if Japan and China ever agree to refer China’s claim to the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands to the Court, the Court shall either apply the following four standards, or if the parties agree thereto, ignore them and decide the case ex aequo et bono (i.e., according to what is right and good, rather than according to the law):

a. international conventions, whether general or particular, establishing rules expressly recognized by the contesting states;  
b. international custom, as evidence of a general practice accepted as law;  
c. the general principles of law recognized by civilized nations;  
d. subject to the provisions of Article 59, judicial decisions and the teachings of the most highly qualified publicists of the various nations, as subsidiary means for the determination of rules of law.

The Court has applied the general principle of estoppel in a number of cases, including disputes over islands.

Thus, the most important evidence for judging China’s claim legally is China’s demand before 1970 for self-determination of the U.S.-administered Ryukyu Islands, specifically including the “Senkaku Islands,” with an option of return to Japanese administration.

For instance, the People’s Daily, the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, published an article titled “The Struggle of the People of the Ryukyu Islands against U.S. Occupation” (Liuqiu Qundao renmin fandui Meiguo zhanling douzheng) on January 8, 1953. It was published in the “Documents” (ziliao) section, which is usually edited carefully to give the party line. The whole [article is posted in simplified characters here](http://preview.tinyurl.com/cq7fdcg). An image of the [first half of the article is here](http://preview.tinyurl.com/cuqvqau).

The first sentence defines the Ryukyu Islands:

The Ryukyu Islands lie scattered in the sea to the northeast of our country’s Taiwan and southwest of Japan’s Kyushu Island, and includes seven groups of islands, namely Senkaku Islands [Jiange Zhudao], Sakishima Islands, Daito Islands, Okinawa Islands, Oshima Islands, Tokara Islands, and Osumi Islands, each with large and small islands; more than fifty islands have names and more than four hundred are unnamed and small; their land area totals 4670 square kilometers.

Self-determination for the Ryukyu Islands, with return to Japanese administration as an option, is demanded in the final sentence (and elsewhere):

The Ryukyu people’s struggle against transformation of Ryukyu by the United States into a military base, against enslavement by the United States, and for freedom, liberation, and peace is not isolated; it is inseparable from the Japanese people’s struggle for independence, democracy, and peace; it is inseparable from the struggle of Asian and Pacific peoples and the peoples of all countries of the world to defend peace; therefore, despite the ongoing barbaric repression of the Ryukyu people by the U.S. occupiers, final victory belongs inevitably to the Ryukyu people.

In short, China demanded the U.S.-administered “Senkaku Islands” outcomes other than transfer to China, even while fiercely fighting U.S. armed forces in Korea, which were supported from Okinawa and mainland Japan. This Chinese demand cannot be explained away as a result of ignorance about the islands’ situation.

I do not evaluate here Mr. Han-yi Shaw’s selection and interpretation of documents from the nineteenth century and before, because they are irrelevant to the estoppel over the most recently recognized border.

However, for the sake of argument, if Mr. Shaw’s interpretation were entirely correct, then the People’s Republic of China (and less explicitly, the Republic of China on Taiwan) has legally disowned the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands by mistake, through sheer lack of interest in the islands before 1970.

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Han Yi Shaw Responds

### Han-Yi Shaw

*is an NYTimes reporter* Blog Contributor [10 October 2012](http://kristof.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/10/04/the-diaoyusenkaku-islands-a-japanese-scholar-responds/#permid=26:4)

This dialogue made possible through this forum has been rational and constructive. I would like to thank Mr. Kristof for this opportunity and respond to comments from the Japanese government, Prof. Nishi, and our readers.   
  
First, it is encouraging that there is one area of general agreement: the matter should be resolved through the Rule of Law. Unfortunately, there remains disagreement at the practical level. Taiwan has proposed submitting the dispute to international jurisdiction, but Japan is only willing to submit the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute to the International Court of Justice, while maintaining that "no dispute exists" over the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands. This double-standard is contrary to the spirit of the universality of the Rule of Law.  
  
International Agreements Relevant to the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands  
  
Japan should also be reminded of the international agreements that it had agreed to. In 1943, the U.S., U.K., and China issued the Cairo Declaration, which stated, "all the territories Japan has stolen from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa (Taiwan), and the Pescadores, shall be restored to the Republic of China. Japan will also be expelled from all other territories which she has taken by violence and greed.” Two years later, the 1945 Potsdam Proclamation stated, “terms of the Cairo Declaration shall be carried out”. Finally, Japan formally accepted the terms of the Potsdam Proclamation through the 1945 Instrument of Surrender.   
  
Regrettably, Japan omits these international agreements and only points to the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty, which neither Taipei or Beijing signed. An international agreement cannot result in the loss of the territory of non-signatory states.  
  
Japan should acknowledge that signed international treaties, not an anonymous 1953 People’s Daily article, form the legal basis of territorial sovereignty.   
  
Also, as noted in my article, the Chinese were unaware that the term "Senkaku Islands" (pronounced as Jiange in Chinese) referred to the former "Diaoyutai Islands".   
  
International Law on terra nullius (Land without Owner)  
  
A fundamental principle of the rule of law is ex injuria jus non oritur (a legal right cannot arise from an unlawful act), which must be taken into account in the context of this dispute.  
  
Japan derives its claim over the disputed islands through occupation of terra nullius (land without owner) in 1895, even though the historical evidence in its own archives proves the opposite. The response from the Japanese government to my article continues to evade this fact. In October 1885, the Japanese foreign minister and ministry officials described the islands as “close to the Chinese border... next to Taiwan and belonging to China”. Here is the actual [handwriting and translation of one of the documents](http://www.flickr.com/photos/87509542@N06/8068699560/).  
  
And as noted in my article, on May 1895 the Okinawa Governor affirmed that the prior 1885 onsite survey, which suggested Chinese ownership, was the first and last survey.   
  
Japan today claims that the cabinet decision of January 14, 1895 was passed three months prior to the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki and therefore not obtained from the war. This again shifts focus away from the actual events of the war.  
  
On September 17, 1894, Japan defeated the Chinese naval fleet, which was major turning point in the war. Japan invaded China in October and captured key cities. By November 1894, China’s intention to sue for peace was well known to Japan and the foreign diplomatic community. In March 1895, Japan invaded the Pescadores Islands next to Taiwan. So while the treaty was signed on April 17, 1895, that does not erase all the prior events that set the stage for Japan's occupation of the disputed islands.  
  
Applicability of Doctrine of Estoppel  
  
Prof. Nishi suggests that the doctrine of estoppel renders Meiji period historical evidence “irrelevant”. As I noted earlier, signed international treaties, not off-topic newspaper articles, should be considered the most authoritative official documents. In other words, the doctrine of estoppel does not apply.   
  
Instead, what applies here is the notion of "critical date", defined as a date after which any actions of the parties can no longer affect the issue. This is to prevent disputants from taking steps to improve their position by changing the situation as it then existed. International law requires the critical date "must be that of the claim or event that raises the question of terra nullius". This means that the critical date should be set to January 14, 1895 and the Meiji historical evidence is indeed relevant.  
  
Lastly, in my article I pointed to Qing period official gazetteers that listed Diaoyutai Island as part of Taiwan. Here are a few examples: Record of Missions to Taiwan Waters (1722), Gazetteer of Kavalan County (1852), Revised Gazetteer of Fujian Province (1871), Pictorial Treatise of Taiwan Proper (1872).   
  
A century ago, the Chinese statesman Li Hongzhang wrote in the preface to the Chinese translation of Treatise on International Law (Gongfa Xinbian), “if this book could be hung up at the gates of our country and observed by nations abroad… together we can bring an end to wars and the world would enjoy peace". Writing at a time when China was suffering at the hands of foreign encroachment, Li had higher hopes for international law. It is hoped that our generation is ready to fulfill the ideals of our forbearers, and ensure that the rule of law will bring about historical justice and peace.

The Diplomat

# There’s Been A Quiet Decline in Senkaku Confrontations

Chinese government ships are reducing visits, plus weekend Japanese security and foreign policy links.

lint

By [Clint Richards](http://thediplomat.com/authors/clint-richards/)

September 19, 2014

Thursday was the [second anniversary of the nationalization of the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands](http://thediplomat.com/2013/11/getting-senkaku-history-right/" \t "_blank) by Japan. In anticipation, the Japanese Coast Guard increased its surveillance this week, while on Wednesday four Chinese government vessels entered the contested territorial waters. While this might seem like a now routine increase in tension, it is actually a much more muted response than last year’s eight vessels. Not just on the anniversary, but [fewer Chinese government ships in general have been entering the area](http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0001561024" \t "_blank) this year. According to the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, in the first year after Japan nationalized the islands Chinese vessels sailed into the disputed waters 216 times, but only 101 times the following year.

There is speculation that China has reduced the number of government vessels around the Senkakus due to heightened tension in the South China Sea. One JCG official noted that while Chinese government vessels used to enter the waters in groups of five, yet they have recently only arrived in groups of three or four in most cases.

However, [the number of Chinese fishing vessels has increased dramatically](http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0001574992" \t "_blank). With just 39 such vessels enter the disputed waters in 2012, the number has risen to 88 in 2013 and 207 this year as of Tuesday. Some JCG officials speculate is has to do with changing sea currents that have driven larger schools of fish into the waters, yet the Japanese government considers Chinese government and fishing vessels to be working more or less in tandem, and still plan to increase the number of patrol vessels in the area from 12 to as many as 18. Japanese fishermen off Okinawa have also raised concerns that the increased number of illegal Chinese fishing boats is hurting their catch.

Meanwhile, [Japan and China’s top naval commanders talked informally](http://jen.jiji.com/jc/eng?g=eco&k=2014091800936" \t "_blank) during an International Seapower Symposium reception on Tuesday hosted by the U.S. in Rhode Island. The Chinese People’s Liberation Army Navy commander Wu Shengli said an official meeting with Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Forces chief of staff Katsutoshi Kawano was not possible before their respective leaders had met. However, according to the *Jiji Press* the two “agreed to communicate more closely to help avoid unexpected incidents at sea,” while Wu said China had begun to implement a naval code of conduct “to avoid ocean contingencies,” which was adopted at the Western Pacific Naval Symposium in China last April.

Russia’s Ambassador to Japan Evgeny Afanasiev said on Thursday in an interview with Russia’s *Rossiyaskaya Gazeta* that President Vladimir [Putin’s anticipated visit to Japan this fall will likely be postponed](http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0001562325" \t "_blank). While on Friday Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida said no official decision had been made on the visit, the government also told the *Yomiuri Shimbun* that it planned to follow its fellow G7 nations [by increasing sanctions on Russia](http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0001577527" \t "_blank) over its involvement in the ongoing Ukrainian crisis. Japan had received criticism from its U.S. and European counterparts for its [largely symbolic and ineffective initial sanctions on Russian officials](http://thediplomat.com/2014/08/sanctions-and-cancelled-meetings-put-an-abe-putin-summit-in-doubt/" \t "_blank) with limited ties to, and assets in, Japan. Government sources said Japan is considering “penalties in the financial and energy sectors” in line with its allies. However, the sources also stated “the government has decided to seek ways to achieve dialogue with Russia even after the additional sanctions are imposed,” and that “the Japanese and Russian governments plan to avoid postponing Putin’s trip to Japan and make necessary readjustments instead.”

In a final and slightly bizarre news item originating from Iceland, earlier this year Ma Jisheng, China’s ambassador to Iceland, [was taken away by Chinese state security for spying for Japan](http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/09/17/uk-china-japan-iceland-idUKKBN0HC0RN20140917" \t "_blank). Ma allegedly became a spy during his service in the Tokyo embassy from 2004 to 2008. The story initially appeared in Hong Kong’s *Ming Po* newspaper before finally reaching *Reuters* via the Chinese language *Mingjing News*, based in New York. China’s foreign ministry has yet to comment on Ma’s whereabouts or who is currently representing Beijing in Reykjavik. There is no information about what kind of secrets Ma may have passed to Japan or how he was turned. The Japanese government has taken a muted tone, saying it is aware of the story but that it would refrain from commenting as it is a domestic issue for Beijing. While espionage is certainly not unusual, the public revelation that China’s foreign service had been compromised at such a high level will be embarrassing for Beijing domestically, particularly as popular nationalist sentiment against Japan has spiked since the Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute began in 2012.

### [Asia Pacific](http://www.nytimes.com/pages/world/asia/index.html)

# China and Japan, in Sign of a Thaw, Agree to Disagree on a Disputed Island Group

By [JANE PERLEZ](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/p/jane_perlez/index.html)NOV. 7, 2014

Video @ <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/08/world/asia/china-japan-reach-accord-on-disputed-islands-senkaku-diaoyu.html?action=click&contentCollection=Asia%20Pacific&module=RelatedCoverage&region=Marginalia&pgtype=article>



#### China, Japan to ‘Overcome’ Difficulties

Ken Okaniwa, the Japanese Foreign Ministry spokesman, said Japan and China agreed on Friday to work on improving ties and to set aside tensions over disputed islands in the East China Sea.

Publish Date November 7, 2014. Photo by Andy Wong/Associated Press.

BEIJING — Signaling a potential thaw in their long-frozen relations, [China](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/china/index.html?inline=nyt-geo) and [Japan](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/japan/index.html?inline=nyt-geo) announced Friday that they would talk to each other about their competing positions on islands in the East China Sea and would gradually resume diplomatic and security discussions.

With that step, the leaders of both countries gave the first public declaration that they are trying to roll back a prolonged standoff that has inflamed nationalist sentiments, damaged economic ties and at times appeared to bring them close to military conflict.

The agreement was announced in similarly worded statements by both sides acknowledging that “different positions exist” over [the islands](https://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/02/world/asia/in-the-east-china-sea-a-far-bigger-test-of-power-looms.html) known in [China](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/china/index.html?inline=nyt-geo) as the Diaoyu and in [Japan](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/japan/index.html?inline=nyt-geo) as the Senkaku.

Even acknowledging differences counts as something of a breakthrough in the standoff. Japan has long declined to discuss China’s claim to sovereignty over the islands, which Tokyo has controlled since the end of [World War II](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/w/world_war_ii_/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier).

[[](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/19/world/asia/for-japan-and-china-small-gesture-holds-great-importance.html)](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/19/world/asia/for-japan-and-china-small-gesture-holds-great-importance.html)

## [For Japan, Small Gesture Holds Great Importance OCT. 18, 2014](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/19/world/asia/for-japan-and-china-small-gesture-holds-great-importance.html)

## [In U.N. Talk, Japan Leader Makes Pitch to NeighborsSEPT. 25, 2014](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/26/world/asia/in-un-talk-japan-leader-makes-pitch-to-neighbors.html)

China has grown bolder in asserting its claim by making unilateral declarations about control of airspace and sending fishing boats and other vessels to test Japan’s resolve to defend the remote islands, raising fears of a broader conflict.

Photo



There are competing claims to the islands in the East China Sea known in China as the Diaoyu and in Japan as the Senkaku. Tokyo has controlled the islands since the end of World War II. Credit Kyodo News, via Associated Press

The adversaries said they had agreed to overcome political obstacles in the spirit of “facing history squarely and looking forward to the future,” while also creating “crisis management mechanisms” to help prevent any future escalation.

The diplomatic overture has special significance because of the timing: Prime Minister [Shinzo Abe](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/a/shinzo_abe/index.html?inline=nyt-per) of Japan and President Xi Jinping of China are expected to meet next week in Beijing at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit meeting, which began Wednesday. Before the statements, the question hanging over the event was whether the leaders of the world’s second and third largest economies would simply shake hands.

Now, there is hope that the Beijing moment could provide for a breakthrough at the APEC forum for world leaders, which begins Monday.

In Tokyo, the director of the China division of Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Atsushi Ueno, said there had been no decision about a meeting between Mr. Abe and Mr. Xi in Beijing. The Chinese state-run news agency Xinhua said in a commentary, “The Chinese Foreign Ministry has yet to offer a definite answer on whether or not Xi will converse with Abe and, if yes, what kind of talks they will have.”

Japan’s foreign minister, Fumio Kishida, will meet with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, on Saturday, Mr. Kishida told reporters on Friday in Beijing, where he was attending a gathering of foreign ministers at the APEC summit meeting.

The accord, which had been the subject of negotiations for some time, was completed in Beijing on Thursday in a meeting between Japan’s national security adviser, Shotaro Yachi, and China’s chief diplomat, State Councilor Yang Jiechi, according to a Japanese official who spoke on the condition of anonymity in keeping with diplomatic protocol.

The tone of the accord showed that China was able to maneuver to prevent mention of Japan’s claim of sovereignty over the islands, said Zhang Baohui, director of the Center for Asian Pacific Studies at Lingnan University in Hong Kong.

Two weeks ago, he said, the Japanese reported that the behind-the-scenes negotiations would lead to a statement that would recognize Japan’s sovereignty but would also say that Japan was aware of China’s position.

“That the statement doesn’t say Japan has sovereignty is a diplomatic victory for China and allows the Xi-Abe meeting to happen in the next few days,” Mr. Zhang said.

The statements on Friday announcing the agreement said that Tokyo and Beijing would gradually resume security and diplomatic dialogue to build mutual trust. But they made no specific mention of one important issue grounded in the countries’ painful [World War II](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/w/world_war_ii_/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier) history: Mr. Abe’s past visits to the Yasukuni shrine in Tokyo, which honors Japanese war criminals along with the country’s other wartime dead.

### [Map](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/02/25/world/asia/claims-south-china-sea.html)

## [Territorial Disputes in the Waters Near China](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/02/25/world/asia/claims-south-china-sea.html)

[China has recently increased its pursuit of territorial claims in nearby seas, leading to tense exchanges with neighboring countries. A map of some of the most notable disputes.](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/02/25/world/asia/claims-south-china-sea.html)

[[](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/02/25/world/asia/claims-south-china-sea.html)](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/02/25/world/asia/claims-south-china-sea.html)

[OPEN Map](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/02/25/world/asia/claims-south-china-sea.html)

Chinese officials have bluntly called for Mr. Abe, a conservative, to end his visits to the shrine, a pledge that would be extremely unpopular with his core constituency. Mr. Abe has made no such promise, said the Japanese official who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

China and Japan have been in a Cold War-style standoff since 2012, when the Japanese government nationalized the disputed islands in the East China Sea, which Japan controls.

Since then, China has repeatedly dispatched paramilitary ships to the waters near the uninhabited islands, though those patrols have been reduced in the last few months, apparently in an attempt to defuse the situation.

China also declared an air defense zone above the islands, setting off an international uproar because it demanded that all aircraft entering the area submit flight plans to China first. The United States, whose most important ally in Asia is Japan, advised its civilian airlines to refrain from doing so.

The Obama administration, concerned about the possibility of an altercation near the islands that could explode into a full-blown conflict, had urged Mr. Abe to try to talk to the Chinese. This year, Mr. Obama said in Tokyo that the United States would stand by its commitment to defend Japan in the event of a conflict.

China has long demanded that Japan formally acknowledge the existence of a dispute over the sovereignty of the islands, and Japan has long refused, worried that doing so would strengthen Beijing’s position. The careful wording of Friday’s statements appeared intended to enable each side to say it had not backed down and to claim a diplomatic victory.

The tensions between China and Japan have had significant economic consequences for both sides, including a drop-off of Japanese investment in China by nearly half in the first six months of this year.

The negotiations that led to the agreement announced on Friday appeared to have started in July with the visit to Beijing of a former Japanese prime minister, Yasuo Fukuda, who met with Mr. Xi.

Thomas Berger, a professor at Boston University and an expert on Japanese politics, said domestic and international concerns had prompted both countries to agree to disagree and get on with other business.

Mr. Abe needed to signal to his domestic audience that his “peace through strength” policy was working, and China, with its economy slowing, needed better economic relations with Japan, he said.

“The overwhelming majority of Japanese, especially in the pragmatic wing of his government, have little desire for an actual conflict with Beijing,” Professor Berger said. “Instead, what they hope is that through a policy of strength, they can get China to moderate its policies toward Japan.”

Mr. Xi was probably hoping to get credit internationally for moderating his position, while not making substantive concessions to Japan over the islands or other issues, Professor Berger said.

NYT

# For Japan, Small Gesture Holds Great Importance

By [MARTIN FACKLER](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/f/martin_fackler/index.html)OCT. 18, 2014

Photo



Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan. Credit Matteo Bazzi/European Pressphoto Agency

TOKYO — The Japanese government has no shortage of issues to worry about — strengthening a faltering economic recovery and trying to persuade a skeptical public to accept a return to nuclear power. But even with all that, the country’s leaders are devoting their energy to a seemingly small gesture: a hoped-for handshake.

The gesture has outsized importance because of the two men who would be joining hands: Prime Minister [Shinzo Abe](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/a/shinzo_abe/index.html?inline=nyt-per) of [Japan](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/japan/index.html?inline=nyt-geo) and President [Xi Jinping](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/x/xi_jinping/index.html?inline=nyt-per) of [China](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/china/index.html?inline=nyt-geo), the tough-minded leaders of Asia’s two biggest economies who have circled each other warily for almost two years. The Japanese hope the greeting, and a possible short meeting to follow, would be the start of repairing relations that have taken a pummeling over [disputed islands](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/12/world/asia/china-accuses-japan-of-stealing-disputed-islands.html) as well as disagreements over the handling of Japan’s wartime history.

That hope has led to weeks of delicate diplomatic maneuverings, with small gestures parsed for deeper meaning. Japanese officials have begun expressing optimism that the meeting — the first since the men took power — would take place next month on the sidelines of a regional economic summit in Beijing.

Photo



President Xi Jinping of China. Credit Harish Tyagi/European Pressphoto Agency

Among the promising signs cited by the Japanese side: a recent visit to Tokyo by the daughter of a former Chinese leader who not only met with Mr. Abe, but also sat with him to watch a performance by a visiting Chinese dance troupe.

The final negotiations are still underway, so it is difficult to tell if the behind-the-scenes negotiations and emissaries shuttling between China and Japan are about to lead to a breakthrough as the Japanese officials suggest. But political analysts in Japan and abroad said both nations appeared to share a growing recognition that they had too much to lose, both economically and politically, if they did not find some way to get along.

Both leaders have come under increasing pressure to contain the damage to their nations’ large economic ties. China’s Commerce Ministry has reported that Japanese direct investment in China dropped by nearly half in the first six months of this year from the year before. And sales of Japanese autos and other products in China are still down, although exports to China’s coveted market have recovered somewhat after a steep drop in the first half of last year brought on by the island dispute.

Experts say the two leaders are also loath to be seen as the bad guy in the region or in Washington as they battle each other for influence in Asia.

With neither country willing to yield over the islands, some analysts now speak of a new status quo, in which China and Japan essentially agree to disagree while returning to business as usual in other areas.

In that case, they said, the standoff could become a permanent feature of the security landscape, with both countries continuing to send ships there to make the point that they are in control, while also taking steps to prevent any escalation.

“Japan and China are seeking a new equilibrium,” said Narushige Michishita, director of the Security and International Studies Program at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies in Tokyo. “The best we can do now is to keep playing this game, but at a lower level, and to find ways to be less confrontational.”

Since Mr. Abe took office in December 2012, Mr. Xi has refused to meet the Japanese leader, an outspoken nationalist whom many in China suspect wants to deny [World War II](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/w/world_war_ii_/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier) atrocities committed by invading Japanese troops. As a precondition for more substantial talks, some Chinese officials have suggested that Mr. Abe show sincerity by promising not to continue [visiting Yasukuni](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/26/world/asia/japanese-premier-visits-contentious-war-shrine.html), a Tokyo shrine to Japan’s war dead that many Chinese see as a symbol of Japan’s lack of repentance.

On Friday, China protested after Mr. Abe sent an offering of a potted plant to Yasukuni to mark an autumn festival, though Japanese officials had said they felt the offering would not affect the negotiations as Mr. Abe did not go in person.

However, the biggest sticking point in the negotiations over a meet-and-greet has been how to handle the tense, two-year standoff over the disputed islands in the East China Sea, known as the Senkaku in Japanese and Diaoyu in China. The countries have been locked in an almost Cold War-style face-off since the purchase of the islands by Mr. Abe’s predecessor in mid-2012, a move the government said was intended to prevent them from falling under the control of Japanese ultranationalists.

Outraged by what it saw as a unilateral move to strengthen Japanese control over islands that it also claims, China began dispatching paramilitary ships to waters near the uninhabited islands and declared an air-defense zone above the islands, setting off an international uproar when it demanded all aircraft entering the area submit flight plans to Chinese authorities.

For his part, Mr. Abe has refused to back down, expanding the flotilla of Japanese Coast Guard ships that chase the Chinese vessels in games of cat and mouse near the islands. Japan has also stepped up its patrols in China’s newly claimed air-defense zone, a snub that provoked some close encounters between Japanese planes and Chinese fighter jets.

China has been demanding that Japan recognize that the islands are in dispute, something that Japan has so far refused to do for fear of opening the door to further concessions.

On Friday, the coveted handshake between Mr. Abe and Mr. Xi seemed to move a step closer to reality as Japan’s Kyodo News agency reported Mr. Abe had shaken hands with China’s No. 2 leader, Prime Minister Li Keqiang, at a dinner for Asian and European leaders in Milan. And last weekend, a top Japanese diplomat visited Beijing in what the Japanese news media said was a trip aimed at negotiating the handshake.

The diplomatic efforts to bring together Mr. Abe and Mr. Xi began in July, when Yasuo Fukuda, a former Japanese prime minister, was allowed to meet Mr. Xi. Mr. Fukuda handed the Chinese leader a letter from Mr. Abe, and first proposed the meeting between the two leaders during the coming Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting.

“A month ago, I would have told you a meeting was not likely,” said one high-level Japanese official who spoke on the condition of anonymity. “Now, I’d say both countries have come around to seeing it as in their interests.”

A Chinese analyst, Wu Xinbo, executive dean of the Institute of International Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai, was more equivocal: “If we see Abe is serious about improving relations with China and taking a more serious and responsible attitude towards the history issue, then that will lead to an improvement in bilateral relations.”

NYT

# In U.N. Talk, Japan Leader Makes Pitch to Neighbors

By [RICK GLADSTONE](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/g/rick_gladstone/index.html)SEPT. 25, 2014

Prime Minister [Shinzo Abe](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/a/shinzo_abe/index.html?inline=nyt-per) of [Japan](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/japan/index.html?inline=nyt-geo) sought on Thursday to counter the deep-seated anger among some other Asia-Pacific countries over his government’s militaristic shift, using a visit to the [United Nations](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/u/united_nations/index.html?inline=nyt-org) to denounce “war culture” and express a desire to improve relations with Japan’s neighbors, in particular [China](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/china/index.html?inline=nyt-geo) and [South Korea](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/southkorea/index.html?inline=nyt-geo), where memories of Japanese wartime atrocities are never far from the surface.

In his speech to the annual General Assembly meeting and a news conference later, Mr. Abe, a longtime conservative who came to office in December 2012, portrayed himself as an outgoing and peace-loving statesman. He has met with dozens of other leaders over the past few years, including many in the Asia-Pacific region, with the conspicuous exceptions of President [Xi Jinping](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/x/xi_jinping/index.html?inline=nyt-per) of China and President Park Geun-hye of South Korea.

## Related Coverage

## [Japan’s Premier Seeks Summit Meeting With South Korean PresidentSEPT. 19, 2014](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/20/world/asia/japans-premier-seeks-summit-meeting-with-south-korean-president.html)

[[](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/05/world/asia/in-south-korea-chinese-leader-cites-japan-as-onetime-mutual-enemy.html)](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/05/world/asia/in-south-korea-chinese-leader-cites-japan-as-onetime-mutual-enemy.html)

## [Chinese Leader, Underlining Ties to South Korea, Cites Japan as Onetime Mutual EnemyJULY 4, 2014](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/05/world/asia/in-south-korea-chinese-leader-cites-japan-as-onetime-mutual-enemy.html)

[[](http://www.nytimes.com/video/world/asia/100000002979834/leaders-of-china-and-south-korea-meet.html)](http://www.nytimes.com/video/world/asia/100000002979834/leaders-of-china-and-south-korea-meet.html)

[video](http://www.nytimes.com/video/world/asia/100000002979834/leaders-of-china-and-south-korea-meet.html)

## [Leaders of China and South Korea MeetJULY 3, 2014](http://www.nytimes.com/video/world/asia/100000002979834/leaders-of-china-and-south-korea-meet.html)

Mr. Abe acknowledged at the news conference that he “would like to improve relations with China and [South Korea](http://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/07/07/q-and-a-john-delury-on-chinese-south-korean-ties/), precisely because they are neighbors.”

He also said that if he is to achieve his wish to meet with Mr. Xi and Ms. Park on the sidelines of an Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in Beijing in less than two months, “quiet efforts are needed.”

He struck a conciliatory tone in his General Assembly speech, emphasizing Japan’s peaceful nature since the collapse of its expansionist empire and defeat in [World War II](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/w/world_war_ii_/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier).

“Japan has been, is now, and will continue to be a force providing momentum for proactive contributions to peace,” he [said,](http://www.un.org/en/ga/69/meetings/gadebate/pdf/JP_en.pdf) according to the official English translation. “Moreover, I wish to state and pledge first of all that Japan is a nation that has worked to eliminate the ‘war culture’ from people’s hearts and will spare no efforts to continue doing so.”

Japan’s relations with China have deteriorated under Mr. Abe, in part over rival claims to [disputed islands](http://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/07/25/a-troubled-outlook-for-china-japan-ties/) in the East China Sea, known as the Senkaku in Japanese and the Diaoyu in Chinese.

Its relations with South Korea have also worsened over South Korean accusations that Japan has not sufficiently atoned for the use of Korean women as sexual slaves, euphemistically known as “comfort women,” by its soldiers during World War II.

Ms. Park has said Mr. Abe must make a “courageous decision” on the comfort women issue if relations are to improve.

China, South Korea and other Asian nations once subjugated by Japan have also expressed concern about Mr. Abe’s reinterpretation of Japan’s postwar Constitution to allow the Japanese military, known as the Self-Defense Forces, to expand its functions.

Mr. Abe reiterated in his General Assembly speech that Japan wishes to become a veto-wielding permanent member of the [United Nations Security Council](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/s/security_council/index.html?inline=nyt-org), reflecting what he called the outdated postwar order of 1945, when the United Nations was born.

The five permanent members are Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States.

Japan is a member of the so-called G-4 group of nations that want to expand the permanent membership of the Security Council. The others are Brazil, [Germany](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/germany/index.html?inline=nyt-geo) and India.

In a communiqué issued on Thursday after ministers from the four nations met on the sidelines of the General Assembly, they underscored their determination for “Security Council reform which makes it more broadly representative, efficient and transparent and thereby further enhances its effectiveness and the legitimacy and implementation of its decisions.”

NYT

# Frosty Meeting Could Be the Start of a Thaw Between China and Japan

By [JANE PERLEZ](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/p/jane_perlez/index.html)NOV. 10, 2014

Photo



Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, left, and China's president, Xi Jinping, shook hands during a meeting in Beijing on Monday.

BEIJING — The meeting between President [Xi Jinping](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/x/xi_jinping/index.html?inline=nyt-per) of [China](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/china/index.html?inline=nyt-geo) and Prime Minister [Shinzo Abe](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/a/shinzo_abe/index.html?inline=nyt-per) of [Japan](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/japan/index.html?inline=nyt-geo) lasted only 25 minutes, less than half the time usually given to formal encounters between the leaders of two nations. The names of the tiny islands in the East China Sea that are at the core of their frosty relationship did not pass their lips.

The two leaders tried a new beginning Monday at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, but the atmosphere could hardly have been cooler. Their countries’ flags, often the backdrop for such diplomatic meetings, were conspicuously absent, lest they convey an impression of amity.

And the body language? At the outset of the meeting, before they were seated, Mr. Abe spoke to Mr. Xi. The cameras caught the Chinese leader listening but not answering, turning instead for the photographers to snap an awkward, less than enthusiastic handshake.

“Obviously Mr. Xi did not want to create a warm or courteous atmosphere,” said Kazuhiko Togo, director of the Institute for World Affairs at Kyoto Sangyo University. “It was a very delicate balancing act for Xi.”

If the Chinese leader smiled too much, he would antagonize the nationalistic audience at home, which has been led for more than two years to believe that Mr. Abe is not worth meeting, Mr. Togo said. If he glared, he would sour world opinion.

The long-awaited encounter came three days after the two countries agreed to a formal document in which they recognized their differing positions on the East China Sea, including on the waters around the islands known as the Diaoyu in China and the Senkaku in Japan.

The two sides said that “following the spirit of squaring history” — an oblique reference to Japan’s brutal occupation of parts of China during [World War II](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/w/world_war_ii_/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier) — they would seek to overcome the problems in the relationship.

The meeting Monday was not intended to deliver any substantive progress on territorial and historical issues that have brought the two richest countries in Asia close to conflict and inflamed nationalist sentiments, officials from both sides said.

But Mr. Abe, who appears to have done most of the talking during the limited time given, asked for the early implementation of a hotline that could help defuse possible clashes between Chinese and Japanese vessels in waters around the islands, said Kuni Sato, the press secretary for the Japanese Foreign Ministry.

In general, Ms. Sato said, Mr. Abe told Mr. Xi that China and Japan should explore a relationship that was based on strong economic cooperation, better relations in the East China Sea and stability in East Asia.

Mr. Abe talked about the need to curb [Ebola](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/e/ebola/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier), and about cooperation on dealing with North Korea. He also squeezed in, as an example of cultural exchange, a mention of his attendance last month at a Chinese ballet company’s performance in Tokyo, according to Ms. Sato.

Mr. Xi had refused to consider a face-to-face meeting since becoming president in March 2013, but Mr. Abe, who was elected at the end of 2012, publicly requested the encounter in the past few months. Japanese diplomats were dispatched to Beijing to arrange the meeting and to complete the accord released Friday, which was intended as a basis for better relations.

The Chinese, as hosts of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum that opened Monday, realized they could not snub Mr. Abe during the summit meeting, and agreed to the encounter, Chinese officials said. President Obama arrived in Beijing for the forum Monday morning.

That Mr. Xi and Mr. Abe met gives a “kickoff” to what could be an exceedingly long process of discussions over the future of the uninhabited islands, and the disagreements over Japanese repentance for atrocities in China during the war, said Yang Xiyu, a senior fellow at the China Institute of International Studies and a former Chinese diplomat.

“The gaps between the two sides are too big to handle, let alone narrow,” in such a meeting between the two leaders, Mr. Yang said.

Since taking control of the islands from the United States in 1972, Japan has consistently refused to concede that there is any dispute over sovereignty. China says the islands were taken from it by Japan at the end of the 19th century.

On the question of what China sees as Japan’s lack of repentance for its occupation of China, Mr. Togo of Kyoto Sangyo University said it would be impossible for Mr. Abe to announce publicly that he would not visit the Yasukuni Shrine, a site in central Tokyo that honors the nation’s war dead, including convicted war criminals. Such a pledge would antagonize his conservative political base.

“Abe cannot say he will not go, but it doesn’t mean he will go,” Mr. Togo said.

Some Japanese analysts said they believed Mr. Abe’s visit to the shrine in December of last year was sufficient to satisfy his domestic constituency, allowing the prime minister to focus on developing a modicum of a working relationship with China.

Even though the four-point document agreed to by both countries appeared to be evenly balanced to give each side “face,” the Chinese government got the upper hand, said Ren Xiao of Fudan University in Shanghai.

Japan contends that there is no dispute over the islands, and that it maintains total control of them. But the four-point accord’s declaration that there were different positions over the islands “fulfilled China’s requirement,” he said. That was a sufficient concession that there was a conflict over the islands, he said.

NYT

# In a Test of Wills, Japanese Fighter Pilots Confront Chinese

By [MARTIN FACKLER](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/f/martin_fackler/index.html)MARCH 8, 2015

Photo



A pilot back from training at Naha Air Base in Okinawa. Under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Japan has embarked on a sweeping overhaul of its military. Credit Ko Sasaki for The New York Times

NAHA, Japan — Once a sleepy, sun-soaked backwater, this air base on the southern island of Okinawa has become the forefront of a dangerous test of wills between two of Asia’s largest powers, [Japan](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/japan/index.html?inline=nyt-geo) and [China](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/china/index.html?inline=nyt-geo).

At least once every day, Japanese F-15 fighter jets roar down the runway, scrambling to intercept foreign aircraft, mostly from [China](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/china/index.html?inline=nyt-geo). The Japanese pilots say they usually face lumbering reconnaissance planes that cruise along the edge of Japanese-claimed airspace before turning home. But sometimes — exactly how often is classified — they face nimbler Chinese fighter jets in knuckle-whitening tests of piloting skills, and self-control.

“Intercepting fighters is always more nerve-racking,” said Lt. Col. Hiroyuki Uemura, squadron commander of the approximately 20 F-15 fighters stationed here at Naha Air Base. “We hold our ground, but we don’t provoke.”

The high-velocity encounters over the East China Sea have made the skies above these strategic waters some of the tensest in the region, unnerving Pentagon planners concerned that a slip-up could cause a war with the potential to drag in the United States. [Japan](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/japan/index.html?inline=nyt-geo)’s refusal to back down over months of consistent challenges also represents a rare display of military spine by this long-dovish nation, and one that underscores just how far the rise of China and its forceful campaign to control nearby seas has pushed Japan out of its pacifist shell.

Photo



An F-15 fighter jet in Japan’s Self-Defense Force during a flight exercise. Credit Ko Sasaki for The New York Times

Under its nationalistic prime minister, Shinzo Abe, Japan has embarked on the most sweeping overhaul of its defense posture in recent memory. Not only has Mr. Abe reversed a decade-long decline in military spending as part of what he calls “proactive pacifism,” but his government is also rewriting laws to lift restrictions on Japan’s armed forces, which are already taking a more active role as far afield as the Gulf of Aden.

It was, in fact, a speech by Mr. Abe that included tough statements on the Islamic State and an aid package to fight extremism that the militants cited as the reason they beheaded two Japanese hostages in January. Videos showing the men’s bodies, posted online, gained Mr. Abe some traction for his notion that Japan must be more prepared to take on those who mean it harm.

At the heart of Mr. Abe’s strategy is a drive to create a more public profile for Japan’s military, the Self-Defense Forces, which have been strictly limited to defending the Japanese homeland since their creation in 1954, and which for decades afterward were barely acknowledged by a public leery of anything resembling Japan’s [World War II](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/w/world_war_ii_/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier) era militarism. Although Mr. Abe still does not have enough public support for his long-stated goal of constitutional changes to permit Japan a full-fledged military, he is pushing Japan’s purely defensive armed forces into an unfamiliar role as the standard-bearer of a more assertive foreign policy, and a deterrent against a modernizing Chinese military.

“Japan is saying, ‘Uh-oh, maybe with a rising China we have to start thinking differently,’ ” said Sheila A. Smith, senior fellow for Japan studies at the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington. “For the first time since [World War II](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/w/world_war_ii_/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier), Japan is finding itself on the front line. And for the first time, it has to ask itself, what does an independent defense plan look like?”

Rebuilt after Japan’s defeat in 1945 at the encouragement of the United States, the country’s technologically advanced military took a secondary role to American forces, helping patrol strategic sea lanes in the face of a Cold War-era Soviet threat. The Self-Defense Forces’ role has expanded over the decades — Japan sent 1,000 noncombat support troops to Iraq in 2004, its biggest overseas deployment since World War II — even though the country still bars itself from possessing offensive weapons like cruise missiles considered necessary to launch full-blown attacks.

With a quarter of a million uniformed personnel, Japan has slowly built up a military larger than that of other midlevel powers like France or Israel, though still far smaller than the 2.3 million-strong People’s Liberation Army in China.

Photo



Service members on the Naha Air Base in Japan. The tug-of-war over the rocky islands near Taiwan, known as the Senkaku to Japan and Diaoyu to China, has been a proxy for the shifting power balance in Asia. Credit Ko Sasaki for The New York Times

Just how far the Self-Defense Forces have come is evident here in the islands of Okinawa, where Japan’s armed forces have been assigned a more demanding — and publicly visible — mission.

The Naha base is just a 20-minute flight by fighter jet from disputed islands that Japan controls, but China claims as its own. The islands, known as the Senkaku in Japan and the Diaoyu in China, have provided the kindling for smoldering resentment between the countries.

As China has stepped up the pressure in recent years by sending more planes and ships to patrol the islands, Japan has scrambled jets to shadow potential intruders and deployed advanced E-2 radar planes with huge dishes mounted on top to keep tabs on the Chinese while it builds a radar station on nearby Yonaguni island, Japan’s first new base in decades.

The tug-of-war over the islands is a proxy for a much larger battle over the shifting power balance in Asia, where China has begun to overturn the century-long supremacy of Japan, its ancient rival. Chinese military planners have called the Okinawan islands, including the disputed ones, part of China’s “first island chain” of defense, meaning that they hope to eventually control the waters west of Japan where the United States and Japan have long held sway.

While low-growth Japan is aware that it cannot match China’s rapidly expanding military spending, it is trying to position its Self-Defense Forces to thwart China from trying to snatch the disputed islands, as well as to deter any designs on other Japanese-held islands. The legal changes Mr. Abe’s government is working on would further free the military to come to the aid of an ally under attack, part of a broader strategy to turn Japan into a fuller military partner of the United States to try to ensure that Washington will come to Tokyo’s aid if fighting breaks out over the islands.

Defense analysts and American commanders agree that Japan’s strongest asset is its Maritime Self-Defense Force, or MSDF, widely regarded as the world’s second-most capable navy after the United States’s. With a tradition dating back to Japan’s formidable wartime fleet, and top hardware like the Aegis radar system, the Japanese have the only naval force, except perhaps Britain’s, with the ability to work so fully and seamlessly with the United States fleet, American commanders say.

This was apparent during naval war games in November involving almost 30 Japanese and American warships. As the huge American aircraft carrier George Washington launched F-18 jets, its closest escort was the Japanese guided-missile destroyer Kirishima. For the first time during such a complex exercise, a Japanese admiral was in charge of both navies’ defense against simulated seaborne attacks.

“The MSDF is the most capable maritime ally that we have,” said Vice Adm. Robert L. Thomas Jr., commander of the Japan-based Seventh Fleet.

While China’s navy added its first aircraft carrier in 2012, defense analysts say Japan still enjoys a decades-wide advantage not only in technology but also in experience operating large warships. Japan has more of these larger, blue-water vessels like destroyers, and some of the world’s stealthiest submarines.

Last year, Japan launched its largest warship since World War II, the Izumo, a small aircraft carrier capable of carrying vertical-takeoff jets. The Izumo is part of a more mobile military that Japan is building to defend its far-flung islands to the south, including the contested ones — with or without the United States, if necessary.

Still, analysts say, time is on China’s side, as its economic growth rates allow ever larger military budgets. While Japan’s defense budget rose 2.8 percent to a record 4.98 trillion yen, or $42 billion in 2015, China announced on Thursday that its own military spending would jump 10.1 percent in the same year, to an estimated $145 billion.

“The more the U.S. and Japan will do, the more China will do,” Shen Dingli, associate dean of the Institute for International Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai, wrote in an email.

Here at the Naha Air Base, the Japanese pilots said they tried to keep their edge with constant training. On a recent morning, they sent up a pair of F-15s to respond to a simulated intrusion, played by three other F-15s.

A growing number of Chinese aircraft over the East China Sea is also keeping Naha busy, so much so that the base plans to add a second F-15 squadron this year. In a nine-month period ending last December, its pilots scrambled 379 times to intercept foreign aircraft — a sixfold jump from those same months in 2010.

“Every year, China’s operational capabilities seem to be rising,” said the Naha base commander, Maj. Gen. Yasuhiko Suzuki. “Every year, our level of anxiety rises along with them.”