

**IMPACT OF “PROTECT DIAOYU
ISLANDS CAMPAIGN” ON
CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS**

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EAI Background Brief No. 720

Date of Publication: 11 May 2012

Executive Summary

1. The Baodiao campaign (保钓运动) or “Protect the Diaoyu Islands” was initiated in the early 70s when Chinese students in China, Taiwan and the US gathered to protest against the US’ return of the Ryukyu and Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands to Japan. For the first time, the Chinese advocates collectively sailed to the disputed islands in 2003.
2. Compared to its civil society, Beijing appeared restrained on this issue as it had to strike a balance between surging nationalistic atmosphere and a mutually beneficial Sino-Japanese relation.
3. The strong Chinese reactions to the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands disputes were driven by war-time memories of atrocities inflicted by Japan, leading to the severance of Taiwan from the mainland.
4. In the East China Sea dispute, Beijing’s responses were atypical: the government takes action after the civilians have launched some activities, re-asserting its stand and emphasizing the over-anxiousness and over-reactiveness of Tokyo. However, in so doing, Beijing is jeopardizing its talks with Japan on the joint exploration of the East China Sea.
5. The Baodiao campaign had made tremendous impact on Taiwan; it drove overseas Taiwanese students to question the Kuomintang (KMT) rule, with some returning to China to pursue their career there, some returning to Taiwan and become political elites in the KMT, and some focusing on internal developments and social movements in Taiwan.
6. Taiwan’s opposition Democratic Progressive Party took particular issue with the South China Sea dispute. The current Ma administration, on the other hand, shuns fundamental questions relating to the overlapping claims of Beijing and Taipei, and on cross-strait relations.

7. The Baodiao campaign had helped advance mutual understanding between China and Taiwan in the early 70s. Compared to today's cross-strait exchanges, those achieved by the campaign were much deeper and more constructive.
8. The Baodiao campaign has also helped to forge a consensus among the Chinese people to combat unjustified foreign encroachment. Beijing, however, needs to provide appropriate ventilation to accumulated public anger and adjust its official propaganda. It also needs to formulate comprehensive strategies to enhance Sino-Japanese relations.