

**THE DIAOYU ISLANDS CONTRETEMPS
AND NATIONALISM IN CHINA**

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EAI Background Brief No. 757

Date of Publication: 4 October 2012

Executive Summary

1. Waves of anti-Japan demonstrations broke out in Chinese cities in late August through September 2012 in response to the Japanese purchase and nationalization plan of the disputed, Japan-controlled Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands (The Diaoyu Islands hereafter), where China, Japan and Taiwan all claimed sovereignty.
2. Chinese netizens however appeared rather rational and self-restraining when they denounced unrestrained nationalism, unwanted violence and boycott of Japanese products.
3. The territorial disputes were reignited this April when right-wing activist, Tokyo governor Ishihara announced that Tokyo planned to raise funding to purchase three islets of the disputed islands.
4. This prompted a group of Hong Kong activists to navigate their way to the Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea on 15 August 2012. The 14 activists were deported on 17 August for illegal entry into Japanese territory.
5. A group of some one hundred Japanese nationalists, including several members of parliament and a Reuters reporter swam ashore the Senkaku Islands (Japanese name of the Diaoyu Islands) to plant the Japanese flag on 19 August.
6. China immediately adopted a plethora of legal and administrative countermeasures. It also attempted to institutionalize patrol of the area by sending fisheries monitoring and marine surveillance vessels to the disputed area regularly.
7. The Japanese public converged on the point that the central government should push through the nationalization plan. The ruling Democratic Party of

Japan adopted a double-sided strategy, one seeking China's understanding on one hand, and proceeding with the nationalization plan on the other.

8. Washington's attitudes remain crucial. It has stayed outside of the disputes by not taking sides for decades. It seems to have recently changed this position by recognizing Japanese sovereignty over the disputed islands. China blames the US for giving Japan the wrong impression.
9. Amid the anti-Japan nationalistic sentiments, Beijing seems keen to unite the people in the name of defending the sovereignty of the disputed islands. Nevertheless, Beijing calls for rational behavior, reining in unwanted violence and reckless property damages.
10. Both China and Japan may need to reconsider whether new policy directions are now required to ensure stable Sino-Japanese ties and regional peace.