

**THE DIAOYU ISLANDS DISPUTE:
AN UPDATE**

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Executive Summary

1. The nationalization plan of the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands (Diaoyu Islands thereafter) by the then Noda administration of Japan in September 2012 had stirred up unsettled sovereignty disputes.
2. China adopted a slew of countermeasures which impacted greatly on bilateral economic and civil exchanges. The announcement of territorial baselines of the Diaoyu Islands on 10 September 2012 and the submission of a continental shelf claim to the United Nations on 14 December 2012 made the most impact.
3. On 30 January 2013, Japan accused China of putting a radar lock, targeting a Japanese warship near the disputed Diaoyu Islands. China repudiated the accusation. Tokyo then decided to drop the case since it had already obtained Washington's understanding
4. On 10 April 2013, Japan and Taiwan reached a fishery agreement, allowing Taiwanese fishermen to operate within 19km of the disputed islands. On 23 April, eight China Marine Surveillance vessels, along with 40 fighter jets, gathered around the disputed islands to prevent Japanese ships from docking.
5. In early May 2013, two Chinese Academy of Social Science scholars posed an article in the *People's Daily* on the yet-to-be-settled sovereignty issue of the Ryukyu Islands (also known as Okinawa in Japan). As one in a row of journal articles, analyses and news reports in the past year, the article greatly unnerved Tokyo, which then launched a formal protest to Beijing.
6. China rebuffed that the Ryukyu issue is a long-term scholarly research topic and reiterated a consistent position on Japanese sovereignty over the Ryukyu Islands.
7. China reacted with great concerns to the Taiwan-Japan fishery agreement, pressing Japan to re-affirm its recognition of the one-China policy. It remains

to be seen how this agreement works out between Taiwan and Japan due to the lack of implementation details.

8. A new Chinese strategy to formalize its claims by performing legal obligations (mandated by the announcement of formal territorial baselines) and by echoing domestic public opinion is gradually taking shape. The new stance comprises two elements, “overlapping” control and Japanese recognition of the existence of disputes.
9. The Ryukyu and Diaoyu Islands issues could best be addressed by adhering to the San Francisco Peace Treaty (1951) and the US-Japan Reversion Agreement (1972). The Ryukyu people have largely identified with Japan. China’s debates on the sovereignty of the Ryukyu Islands may risk causing endemic resentment among the Ryukyu people.