

The U.S.–Japan Alliance and the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao Islands Dispute

: Is the U.S. a Mediator or Conflict–Inducer?

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Abstract

There has been continued tension between Japan and China in the East China Sea since 2010. The managing or resolution of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao Islands dispute is so critical that many observers have emphasized the importance of the role of the U.S. and have called upon the country to act as a mediator. However, there has been no research on the change in the U.S. stance.

Therefore, this study examines the changes in the U.S.'s stance on the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao Islands dispute by analyzing its position over time. A three-phase analysis of the U.S.'s stance will be examined through the analyzing of the Obama administration. The analysis of various mediums including the statements of high-level policymakers will show that the U.S.'s stance has changed from neutral to intervention and that its support of Japan is becoming increasingly conspicuous. The conclusion will

aim to propose the implications this research has for Northeast Asia.

주제어

the U.S.-Japan alliance, the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao Islands dispute, the U.S. intervention, the Obama administration, Northeast Asia

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I . Introduction

There has been continued tension between Japan and China in the East China Sea following Japan's nationalization of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao Islands in 2012. This tension has only been heightened with China, Japan, and South Korea's declaration of Air Defense Identification Zones (ADIZ) in the winter of 2013. China's ADIZ (CADIZ) is seen as an attempt to drive out major military forces in its neighboring seas and protect its exclusive economic zone. The CADIZ also aims to display China's reinforced military strength while solidifying its status as a powerful nation. Japan, which had already established its ADIZ (JADIZ) in 1969, has protested strongly against the CADIZ by requesting for its removal due to the fact that the CADIZ includes the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and that approximately half of the CADIZ overlaps with the JADIZ.¹⁾

1) Korea expressed its regret over China's ADIZ including Ieodo (Suyan) Rock and announced an expanded KADIZ. The KADIZ included the islands of Ieodo, Marado and Hongdo which coincides with its flight information region (FIR) set by the

Conflict in the East China Sea, which has rapidly intensified since 2010, has deepened to the extent that an escalation into an armed conflict would not be surprising. Hence, the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao Islands dispute is not only an existing conflict between Japan and China but one of the most critical elements hindering the peaceful development of Northeast Asia. Japan and China are powerful nations both economically and politically on not only the regional level but also in a global capacity. These two countries are effectively holding a time bomb that might put the peace and economy of the entire world at risk. The effect that further escalation would have on Korea in particular, as the closest country geographically, is incalculable.

For these reasons, the managing or resolution of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao Islands dispute is so critical that many observers have emphasized the importance of the role of the U.S. and have called upon the country to act as a mediator. So what stance has the U.S. taken so far regarding the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao Islands dispute? What role has it played? A substantial number of studies have discussed the relationship between the U.S. and Northeast Asia or the intervention of the U.S. in the conflict but without providing a detailed analysis on its exact position on Japan and China's territorial dispute. Moreover, there has been no research on the change in the U.S. stance. Naturally it has been expected that the U.S. would take on an appropriate position regarding the peace and stability of Northeast Asia, but there is no actual academic research on this matter.

Therefore, this paper will examine the changes in the U.S.'s stance on the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao Islands dispute by analyzing its position over time. Section two will be a brief introduction to the history of the Senkaku/Diaoyu

International Civil Aviation Organization,

Dao dispute and the U.S. while section three will divide existing research into three approaches—the historical approach, the U.S.’s interest and motivational approach, and the trilateral relations approach—and prove the limitations of each. A three-phase analysis of the U.S.’s stance will occur in section four through the examination of the Obama administration. The analysis of various mediums including the statements of high-level policymakers will show that the U.S.’s stance has changed from neutral to intervention and that its support of Japan is becoming increasingly conspicuous. The conclusion will aim to propose the implications this research has for Northeast Asia.

II . History of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao Dispute and the U.S.

The United States has had an inseparable relationship with the Japan-China territorial dispute in the East China Sea stemming from its very origin when the U.S. broached the issue of sovereignty of Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao. This involvement has served to intensify the present-day dispute. The U.S.’s administration of the islets began in 1953 as a result of the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951. After the victory of World War II, the United States, as one of the main countries defeating the Japanese invasion, was involved in and led the disposal of Japan. The treaty placed the Nansei Islands south of the 29th parallel of north latitude under the trusteeship of the United Nations with the United States acting as the sole administering authority while China was excluded from the peace treaty.²⁾

The treaty did not mention the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, but it referred to other islets that had reverted to Chinese control or which China claimed.³⁾ Under the auspices of the trusteeship system, the United States “will have the right to exercise all and any powers of administration, legislation and jurisdiction over the territory and inhabitants of these islands, including their territorial waters.”⁴⁾ This unitary action without China’s participation laid the foundation for potential territorial disputes among the countries concerned.

On December 25, 1953, the Civil Administration Proclamation No. 27 (defining the “geographical boundary lines of the Ryukyu Islands”) issued by U.S. Army General David A. D. Ogden in the presentation of the government of the Ryukyu Islands, arbitrarily expanded its administration to cover China’s Diaoyu Dao for the first time. This illegal jurisdiction generated strong opposition from China and gave Japan the unlawful evidence to claim Diaoyu Dao as its own territory in the 1970s. This was a critical period during which the China-Japan Diaoyu Dao dispute became open and apparent. In October 1968, the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East came to the conclusion that Diaoyu Dao might hold major potential for a submarine oil field, immediately after which the legislature of the U.S.-led Ryukyu government drafted the Decision on the Application of the Senkaku Islands Territorial Defense, thus constituting the first time Japan publicly claimed sovereignty over Diaoyu Dao.⁵⁾

On June 17, 1971, the United States and Japan signed the Agreement

2) State Council Information Office, 2012.

3) Congressional research service, 2013.

4) No. 1832. San Francisco Peace Treaty, 8 September, 1951.

5) 郭永虎, 「关于中日钓鱼岛争端中“美国因素”的历史考察」, 『中国边疆史地研究』, 2005, p. 114.

Concerning the Ryukyu Islands and the Daito Islands which was also known as Okinawa Reversion Treaty, “returning” all administration powers over those islands to Japan, Japan has since then exercised executive power over the islands including Diaoyu Dao with the approval of the U.S. government. The blatant stealing of territory from China without any legal grounds provoked firm condemnation and opposition by both the Chinese government and people including those in Taiwan and abroad. “The backroom deals between the United States and Japan concerning Diaoyu Dao are acts of grave violation of China's territorial sovereignty. They are illegal and invalid. They have not and cannot change the fact that Diaoyu Dao belongs to China.”⁶⁾

Although the Japanese government gained administrative power over Diaoyu Dao from the U.S. government through the Okinawa Reversion Treaty, “the U.S. State Department asserted that the United States took a neutral position with regard to the competing claims of Japan, China, and Taiwan.”⁷⁾ Given the bilateral development of U.S.-China relations and the background of the Cold War, the U.S. government appears to continue its ambiguous neutral stance on the Diaoyu Dao dispute.

As previously stated, the stance of the U.S. government toward the Diaoyu Dao dispute is ambiguous. The security treaty between Japan and the United States, signed the same day as the San Francisco Peace Treaty, served as a lifeline to Japan during the Cold War period. On January 19, 1960, the security treaty was revised to become the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States with Article 5 stating,

6) State Council Information Office, 2012.

7) Congressional research service 2013, p. 4.

Each Party recognizes that an armed attack against either Party in the territories under the administration of Japan would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional provisions and processes. Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall be immediately reported to the Security Council of the United Nations in accordance with the provisions of Article 51 of the Charter. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.⁸⁾

It is Article 5 with the wording “administration” of Japan instead of “sovereignty” of Japan that makes the Japanese government believe that the U.S. would expand military protection to Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao as it is part of the actual “administration” of the Japanese government. In regards to this assumption of Japanese, the U.S. government has never denied or clearly articulated its stance on Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao, which implicates that if ever a flare-up between China and Japan over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao issue should occur, the U.S. will likely become involved.

Since the mid-1990s, China and Japan have had periodical tensions regarding the East China Sea. It has also become an unstable and sensitive issue in China-U.S.-Japan trilateral relations regarding the risk of involving U.S. military in this conflict as a result of the U.S.-Japan alliance and their security treaty. After the Cold War, the U.S. government has had a slight change on its stance on the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao dispute, maintaining its

8) Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America, Article 5, available at: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/q&a/ref/1.html>

neutral attitude and occasionally attempting to implicate the possibility of applying the U.S.-Japan treaty in regards to Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao security. Evidence of this perspective was indicated in several public speeches during the Bush administration.

In recent years, the administration of U.S. President Barack Obama has actively participated in the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao dispute and China-Japan relations both politically and militarily as the result of its increasing interest in East Asia affairs in what is called the U.S. “pivoting” to East Asia or its “re-balancing” strategy. This article aims to explore the influence of the Obama administration on the China-Japan Diaoyu Dao dispute, determine to what extent and in what manner the U.S. influences the territorial dispute, and if possible, attempt to seek out potential ways to solve the dispute utilizing trilateral efforts.

Ⅲ . Literature Review

As the Japan-China conflict in the East China Sea has become complicated and escalated in recent years, a few scholars both domestically and internationally are attaching great importance to related research on this topic. Existing studies can be divided into three main groups.

1. Historical Approach

Some scholars, mostly Chinese, have dated back to the original intervention of the United States in detail. In his article, Yonghu Guo points

out that U.S. policies towards Japan have a strong connection to the generation, evolution and changes of the Diaoyu Dao issue.⁹⁾ In general, since the Cold War, the U.S. has gradually changed its attitude from one centered on neutrality to that of careful intervention, which will be an important variable in settling the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao dispute in the future. Jiangyong Liu also asserts that the U.S. stance on the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao dispute has changed from superficial “neutrality” to “tendentious interruption” especially in the 21st century.¹⁰⁾ These articles give a detailed view of the U.S. stance and its development in regards to the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao dispute, providing the historical basis from which to observe the current tensions of the China-Japan territorial dispute.

Meanwhile, Chun states that the territorial disputes in Northeast Asia stem from conflicting views on history and that the U.S.’s political interventions in the region, aimed at building a more U.S.-friendly Asia, also play a crucial role in the situation. She explains that the U.S. stance on territorial disputes in Northeast Asia can be rationalized based on three concepts: 1) the U.S. believes that maintaining a level of tension between China, South Korea and Japan works to sustain U.S. leadership in the region; 2) the U.S. hopes that by urging cooperation among the Northeast Asian neighbors will serve to benefit its own national interests; 3) the U.S. wants to keep China in check by writing policies that favor Japan.¹¹⁾

9) 郭永虎, 「关于中日钓鱼岛争端中“美国因素”的历史考察」, 『中国边疆史地研究』, 2005.

10) 刘江永, 「美国介入钓鱼岛将面临两难困境」, 『国际问题研究』 3, 2011, pp. 10~19.

11) Chun, Ja-hyun, “A History of Territorial Disputes in Northeast Asia and U.S. Involvement in the Region- The rise of China and changes in U.S. foreign policy”, *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies* Vol. 70.

2. The U.S.'s Interest and Motivational Approach

Given the background of the U.S. stance and relations in regards to the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao dispute, further studies provide different explanations to the U.S.'s motivations for intervention. John J. Mearsheimer asserts that China cannot rise peacefully as the ideal situation for any great power is to be the hegemony in the system; therefore, the U.S. can be expected to go to great lengths to contain China and ultimately weaken it to the point where it is no longer a threat to U.S. domination in Asia. For this reason, the U.S. would definitely continue to interfere in the Diaoyu Dao dispute from the standpoint of the U.S.-Japan alliance.¹²⁾ Shengyi Hou analyzes the U.S. stance on the Diaoyu Dao dispute from the perspective of geopolitics, implicating that the Obama administration plans to strategically pivot to Asia and try to be a balancer between China and Japan given the negative condition of its decreasing economic power.¹³⁾ Fanghua Lu confirms that the upgrading of the Diaoyu Dao dispute has direct connection to the U.S.'s "pivot to Asia" strategy. On the one hand, the U.S. tries to contain the rise of China by interfering in the Diaoyu Dao dispute, and on the other hand, Japan refuses to negotiate with China via diplomacy but instead strengthens its military strength and alliance with the U.S. so as to seize Diaoyu Dao utilizing power and hegemony.¹⁴⁾

While many scholars have seen the ties between the U.S.'s strategy and

12) Mearsheimer, John J. "The gathering storm: China's challenge to US power in Asia", *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* Vol. 3, No. 4, 2010, pp. 381~396.

13) 侯胜一, 孟庆义, 侯典芹, 『从地缘政治视角看美国高调介入中日钓鱼岛争端』, 『理论导刊』 12, 2013, pp. 109~112.

14) 卢芳华, 『美国“重返亚洲”战略与中日钓鱼岛争端』, 『桂海论丛』 29(4), 2013, pp. 15~20.

the Diaoyu Dao dispute, it does not mean the link is positively related. As Chee Mun Chew¹⁵⁾ argues, the efforts of the Obama administration's new Asian strategy could become counter-productive as a stronger U.S. presence might embolden some regional countries to aggravate their island disputes with China. Therefore, the U.S. should adopt a balancing act in East Asia in order to keep itself from being dragged into a direct confrontation with China.¹⁵⁾

3. Trilateral Relations Approach

As one of the core and strategic issues between China, Japan and the United States, the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao dispute has been a flashpoint in both bilateral and trilateral relations. Michael McDevitt puts the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao dispute into a larger context by exploring its importance to China, Japan and the U.S., concluding that the United States could become militarily involved if China and Japan have more blows over sovereignty.¹⁶⁾ Furthermore, Feng Zhaokui Feng argues that the U.S. is reluctant to witness China-Japan come to a mutual agreement given that its sense of "existence" in Asia and interests would be undermined and excluded if China and Japan stand together.¹⁷⁾ In addition, Degui Kang argues that the United States has

15) Chew, Chee Mun, "China's Perspective on the major island disputes in the east and south China seas: Implications for the US's strategic rebalance toward Asia", *Dissertation*, Air University, 2013.

16) McDevitt, Michael, "The East China Sea: The Place Where Sino-US Conflict Could Occur", *American Foreign Policy Interests* Vol. 36, No. 2, 2014, pp. 100~110.

17) Feng Zhaokui analyzes that the U.S. is reluctant to witness China-Japan become approachable in that its sense of "existence" in Asia and interests would be excluded and undermined if China and Japan stand together.

played an important role in balancing China-Japan relationships under the principle of “Divide and Rule,” which can be evidenced by its treaties with Japan such as the San Francisco Peace Treaty and “Reversion Treaty.”¹⁸⁾ The ultimate purpose of the U.S. is to maintain leadership in East Asian affairs. Apparently, the Diaoyu Dao dispute has become an influential factor in the game strategy among these three political powers. Whenever this issue comes to the forefront, one should remember that it is not only a territorial issue but also related to political, diplomatic, economic and mostly military responses from all three sides.

IV. Analysis of the Obama Administration’s Stances

1. Phase 1 (2009): “Pivot to Asia” and “Re-balancing”

Since the moment the Obama administration took office, its policy toward Asia has gradually changed with President Obama frankly deeming himself “the first Pacific president,” and the U.S.’s visibility and presence in the Asia-Pacific region has been upgraded on many levels—politically, economically, and militarily. Perhaps most notably since 2009, the administration has consistently given considerable time and emphasis to Southeast Asia and to regional multilateral institutions.¹⁹⁾ The efforts by the

18) 廉德瑰, 「解析美国在钓鱼岛问题上的立场」, 『太平洋学报』 21(7), 2013, pp. 74-80.

19) Manyin, Mark, “Senkaku (Diaoyu/Diaoyutai) Islands Dispute: U.S. Treaty Obligations,” *Congressional Research Service*, January 22, 2013, p. 2. <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/>

United States to restore and enhance its engagement in Asia have been labeled by many observers as responses to contain China's growing influence in the regional and global sphere. Despite these assertions, the Obama administration has officially stated its measures are not aimed at any particular country.

Under the influence of the U.S.'s "pivot to Asia" or "re-balancing" strategy, the U.S.'s stance towards the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao dispute has gradually changed. On February 26, 2009, the Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso in his answer to Democrat Maehara stated, "Since the Senkaku Islands are inherently Japanese territory, they are applied to (Japan-U.S.) security treaty,"²⁰⁾ which is the first time that a Japanese Prime Minister ever made such a claim. On the following day, U.S. Congress members implicated that the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao has been under the administration of the Japanese government and thus falls under the provisions of the security treaty.

Nothing official has been revealed regarding Tokyo-Washington communications as a basis for this remark. However, it is probably no coincidence that Japan's Prime Minister mentioned the Japan-U.S. security treaty for the first time regarding a territorial issue, and the following day, U.S. legislators made similar remarks on the issue. It can only be assumed that there was communication between Tokyo and Washington regarding the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao dispute but perhaps through unofficial channels. In other words, the U.S.'s "pivot to Asia" or "re-balancing" strategy can be seen as connected to the U.S.'s intentions to further boost diplomatic ties with

R42761.pdf.

20) 于青:日媒报道麻生称钓鱼岛属于日美安保条约对象,人民网, available at: <http://japan.peopledaily.com.cn/35469/6602182.html>

Japan in preparation for a Chinese threat. This reassertion of relationships continued with the U.S. expressing official support of Japan starting in 2010.

2. Phase 2 (Year 2010~2011): Public Support of Japan

In the 2010, the U.S.'s strategy in Asia and its stance on the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao dispute were evident. Strategically, the U.S. tried to upgrade its alliances with Japan and South Korea with constant military exercises on an unprecedented scale. On the one hand, diplomatically, U.S. officials publicly announced the country's leadership role in Asia, attended the East Asia Summit for the first time in history, and visited many Asian countries surrounding China. On the other hand, economically, the U.S. pressured Japan and South Korea to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP) with the exclusion of China. Efforts accelerated as China's Asia policy became more hard-edged during 2010. In 2011, the United States' military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan significantly declined.²¹⁾

After taking all these factors into consideration, as stated by Simon Tay, "If you are a Chinese strategist, you don't have to be a paranoid conspiracy theorist to sense that the United States is leading other Asian countries to be against China."²²⁾ Since the U.S. considers the U.S.-Japan alliance as the cornerstone of its Asian security systems, the U.S. has strengthened its military cooperation with Japan in all aspects and publicly supported Japan's stance on the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao dispute.

21) Lieberthal, Kenneth, 2011. "The American Pivot to Asia," *Foreign Policy* 21.

22) 美智库称中国没忘 96 年耻辱 决不让历史重演, 环球网, available at: <http://mil.huanqiu.com/observation/2011-03/1530023.html>

3. Phase 3 (Year 2012~2014): Strong Support of Japan

A significant incident occurred in September 2012 when the Japanese government announced the "purchase" of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands from the islands' private Japanese "owners" and implemented the "nationalization" of the islands which worsened the China-Japan relationship. This announcement induced severe criticism from China, including repeated protests over the situation and the ransacking of Japanese restaurants and businesses by some activists. Furthermore, the bilateral relations of China and Japan became "politically cold and economically cold."

In the wake of the "purchase" incident, domestic protests against Japanese actions increased on a large scale and had a pronounced impact with extreme nationalists calling for a boycott on Japanese goods. In response to Japan's illegal "purchase" of the islands and to comfort escalating nationalism at home, China began to regularly deploy China Maritime Surveillance (CMS) and Fisheries Law Enforcement Command (ELEC) ships near Diaoyu Dao to assert sovereignty over China's territorial waters. On November 23, 2013, China announced an East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) which was originally initiated by the U.S. to defend Chinese sovereignty from a legal perspective.

Three days after Japan's actions regarding the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, the State Council of the United States announced that they were concerned about the "purchase" plan and stressed that Article 5 of U.S.-Japan security treaty was applicable to the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao issue. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Kurt Campbell, highlighted, "We do acknowledge clearly ... that Japan maintains effective

administrative control . . . and, as such, this falls clearly under Article 5 of the Security Treaty.”²³⁾ In his statement, Campbell cited the 1960 Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the U.S. and Japan, which forms the basis of U.S. influence in the region. Indeed, Article 5 states that,

Each Party recognizes that an armed attack against either Party in the territories under the administration of Japan would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional provisions and processes.

Under the provisions of Article 5, the U.S. is obligated to come to Japan’s defense if attacked, and the country has steadily increased its military presence and influence in the area.

Noting these concerns, the U.S. Congress eventually inserted the “FY2013 National Defense Authorization Act” into the existing agreement. This resolution states that “the unilateral action of a third party will not affect the United States’ acknowledgment of the administration of Japan over the Senkaku Islands.”²⁴⁾ In January 2013, Hilary Clinton also emphasized that “[the U.S.] oppose(s) any unilateral actions that would seek to undermine Japanese administration” of the islands during her opening remarks to the press alongside the Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida.²⁵⁾ This was

23) Eckert, Paul. 2012. “Treaty with Japan Covers Islets in China Spat: U.S. Official,” *Reuters*, September 20. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/09/20/us-china-japan-usa-idUSBRE88J1HJ20120920>

24) U.S. Bill HR4310, 112-239

25) Manyin, Mark, “Senkaku (Diaoyu/Diaoyutai) Islands Dispute: U.S. Treaty Obligations,” *Congressional Research Service*, January 22, 2013, <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42761.pdf>.

deemed a clear warning to China that Washington would intercede should there be military clashes over the Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute.

Moreover, U.S. Defense Secretary Hagel noted that the U.S. was “deeply concerned” with the conflict in the East China Sea, in which China appeared to be attempting to control access to the area. The imposition of the zone was a “destabilizing attempt to alter the status quo in the region,” Hagel said. “This unilateral action increases the risk of misunderstanding and miscalculation … We are in close consultation with our allies and partners in the region, including Japan. We remain steadfast in our commitments.”

Hagel also reminded Beijing that the remote Senkaku Islands are included in the 1952 U.S.-Japan security treaty, under which the U.S. is committed to fighting alongside Japan to repel any “common danger”.²⁶⁾ Furthermore, U.S. President Barack Obama confirmed, for the first time during his tour to Asia in April 2014, that the United States had the duty to defend Japan’s sovereign territory especially in regards to the Japanese control of the Senkaku Islands. Obama emphasized that “the policy of the United States is clear—the Senkaku Islands are administered by Japan and therefore fall within the scope of Article 5 of the U.S.-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security. And we oppose any unilateral attempts to undermine Japan’s administration of these islands”²⁷⁾

In response to Obama’s declaration, China immediately issued a public

26) Tisdall, Simon, “China Escalates Islands Dispute with Japan,” *The Guardian*, November 25, 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/24/us-warns-beijing-island-dispute-senkakus>

27) *The Diplomat*, 2014. Obama: Senkakus Covered Under US-Japan Security Treaty, available at: <http://thediplomat.com/2014/04/obama-senkakus-covered-under-us-japan-security-treaty/>

statement through Foreign Ministry spokesman Gang Qin saying, “The U.S. should respect facts, take a responsible attitude, remain committed to not taking sides on territory and sovereignty issues, speak and act cautiously and earnestly play a constructive role in regional peace and stability”²⁸⁾ While China has officially expressed its opposition, the Japanese government has not changed its strategy on the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao dispute.

V. Conclusion

This study has examined the changing aspects of the U.S. stance on the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao Islands dispute through an analysis based on specific time periods. The focus was on the Obama administration in particular with the years 2009 through 2014 divided into three periods. While 2009 is phase one which was a period defined by the U.S.’s “pivot to Asia” and “re-balancing” policies, the years 2010 and 2011 constitute phase two when the U.S. began officially expressing its support of Japan. Phase three occurred between 2012 and 2014 when the U.S. exhibited strong support of Japan while opposing China regarding the East China Sea issue. In other words, up until 2009, the U.S.’s stance regarding the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao Islands dispute was neutral—at least on the surface. However, since 2009, the U.S. has changed its perspective as it continues to gradually align itself with Japan.

This research holds significance in two aspects, the first being its academic contribution. There are studies on the U.S.’s role regarding

28) Ibid, ,

China-Japan relations but most of them discuss the level of appropriateness in regards to the role the U.S. should or must take in the region. A rare few have scrutinized the U.S.'s stance on the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao Islands dispute through the analysis of detailed discourse. Moreover, none have analyzed the changes over time occurring within a single U.S. administration. To overcome the limitations of such existing studies, this paper aimed to execute objective research through the analysis of statements by high-level U.S. policymakers and legislation documents. The implication can be found in that through this, the study attempts to convincingly prove the stance the U.S. has had on the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao Islands dispute during Obama administration.

The second significant aspect of this research centers on the policy implications. Many observers tend to perceive the U.S. as a mediator not only for the China-Japan dispute but also in conflicts throughout Northeast Asia. They believe the U.S. will remain a key player in the region due to its important historical role. However, it is certain that China, Japan, and even Korea should not establish policies based on this premise. The U.S. can make various choices depending on their national interests and desired strategic advantages. As demonstrated with the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao Islands dispute, those choices might conflict with the interests of the countries concerned, in this case, namely China and Japan. The U.S. might decide to take sides and support Japan in the conflict with China. However, there is also the possibility that the U.S. chooses to play the role of conflict-inducer especially if it deems that maintaining conflict between the two nations is advantageous in regards to its own interests.

It is undeniable that the U.S. is a key player in the Northeast Asia region. But it must be recognized that the interests of the U.S. and nations

within the region do not always align. Therefore, it is necessary to keep a close eye on the changes in the U.S.'s stance toward the Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao Islands dispute and carry out appropriate measures regarding the issue. Stability in the Northeast Asia region can be achieved—not through dependence on the U.S.—but through the rational and peaceful decisions of the countries concerned. 日本空間

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천자현

2012년, 일본의 센카쿠/다오위다오의 국유화 조치를 기점으로 동중국해에서의 중일 간 긴장이 지속되고 있다. 2010년부터 급격히 심화되어 온 동중국해에서의 갈등은 언제 무력분쟁으로 발전되어도 이상하지 않을 정도로 악화되고 있다. 이러한 Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao Islands disputes는 단지 일본과 중국의 갈등만이 아닌, 동북아시아의 평화로운 발전을 저해하는 중요한 요소 중 하나로 자리잡고 있다. 이처럼 센카쿠/다오위다오 영토 갈등의 관리와 해결이 중요하기 때문에 이 지역에서 미국의 중재를 촉구하는 목소리 역시 높아지고 있다.

지금까지 적지 않은 연구들이 미국과 동북아시아 지역과의 관계 혹은 개입에 대해 논의해왔지만, 일본-중국 간 영토 분쟁에 대한 미국의 입장을 구체적으로 분석하지는 않았다. 특히, 그 입장의 변화를 분석한 연구는 없었다. 따라서 본 연구는 센카쿠/다오위다오 영토 갈등에 대한 미국의 입장을 시기적으로 나누어 분석하고, 그 변화 양상을 검토하였다. 특히, 분석의 시기를 오바마 정부로 좁히고 그 범위를 3 시기(phase)로 구분하여 분석하였다. 이를 통해 미국의 입장이 중립에서 개입으로 변화하며, 일본에 대한 지지가 점점 노골화되고 있다는 것을 고위 정책결정자들의 발언 등을 분석함으로써 밝혀내었다. 그리고 결론에서는 본 연구의 분석이 동북아시아에 주는 함의를 제시하는 것으로 마무리한다.

주제어

미일동맹, 센카쿠/다오위다오 영토 분쟁, 일중관계, 동북아시아