

FPAMUN II

**SECURITY COUNCIL
DIAOYU/SENKAKU ISLANDS
CONFLICT**



Topic: Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands Conflict

Background

The Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands conflict is a territorial dispute over a group of uninhabited islands known as the Senkaku Islands by Japan and Diaoyu Islands by China. In the 1970's when the possibility of oil reserves surfaced, China contemplated declaring sovereignty over the islands. The islands are located in the East China Sea and are controlled by Japan. These islands possess great importance as they are in close vicinity of shipping lanes, offer rich fishing grounds, and lie near potential oil and gas reserves.

Japan's stance on the situation goes back to post WW2; Japan relinquished entitlements of several territories and islands including Taiwan in the 1951 Treaty of San Francisco. These islands in particular, however, came under U.S. trusteeship and were returned to Japan in 1971. Japan says China raised no objections to the San Francisco deal. In addition, it says that it is only since the 1970s when the issue of oil resources in the area emerged and that Chinese and Taiwanese authorities began pressing their claims.

China's claim on the islands is that it has been part of Chinese territory since ancient times, serving as important fishing grounds administered by the province of Taiwan. When Taiwan was returned in the Treaty of San Francisco, China says the islands should have been returned too. Beijing says Taiwan's Kuomintang leader Chiang Kai-shek did not raise the issue, even when the islands were named in the later Okinawa reversion deal, because he depended on the US for support. Separately, Taiwan also claims the islands.

USA also has a role to play in this conflict: the U.S. and Japan forged a security alliance in the wake of World War II and formalized it in 1960. Under the deal, the US is given military bases in Japan in return for its promise to defend Japan in the event of an attack. This means if conflict were to erupt between China and Japan, Japan would expect US military back-up. US President Barack Obama has confirmed that the security pact applies to the islands - but has also warned that escalation of the current row would harm all sides.

Timeline

1403, 1534	Chinese books are published denoting the islands as "Diaoyu"
1885	Japanese Foreign Affairs Minister Kaoru Inoue writes that annexing the Senkaku/Diaoyu chain would only add suspicion and anxiety to Sino-Japanese relations
14 January 1895	Japan proclaims the islands to be unclaimed; they erect sovereignty markers on the Senkaku/Diaoyu chain.

17 April 1895	The First Sino-Japanese War comes to a close; Japan receives Taiwan and a number of small island chains.
1932	Japanese national, Zenji Koga, purchases four of the islands to continue running a bonito and albatross feather processing plant on the island.
1940	The islands are left uninhabited after Koga's business is discontinued
1951	Under the San Francisco Peace Treaty Japan returns its imperial acquisitions, Taiwan and "its associated islands".
1969	A report issued by the UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East estimates there are extensive oil and gas reserves around the Senkaku/Diaoyu region.
17 June 1971	Japan and the United States sign the Okinawa Reversion Deal returning control of the Ryuku and Daito Islands to Japan.
1996	A Japanese lighthouse is constructed on one of the islands causing Chinese activists to repeatedly sail to the islands in protest.
2005	A group of 50 Taiwanese fishing boats protest by the islands.
2008	China and Japan reach agreement to jointly develop gas fields in disputed Chunxiao/Shirakaba region north of the Senkaku/Diaoyu chain. This failed as Japan later accused China of violating the agreement.
September 2010	A Chinese trawler collides with two Japanese coast guard vessels leading to Japan's seizure of the vessel and the arrest of its crew. All of the crew were released shortly after the incident.
2011	China National Offshore Oil Corp announces it has been pumping oil from the disputed Chunxiao/Shirakaba gas fields.
April 2012	The Japanese government formally purchases three of the islands from their private owner.
January 2013	Beijing announces it will begin geological surveys on the islands in order to protect their maritime rights.

Timeline (used with permission from original author, Spencer Quong; Vancouver MUN 2014)

U.N. Involvement

The conflict over the Senkaku Islands among Japan, China, and Taiwan began in 1969, when the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and Far East (ECAFE) had identified potential oil and gas reserves. In 2012, both Japan and China had submitted claims to the U.N. commission, stating that each has rights to the territorial claims of the Senkaku Islands. While the Permanent Mission of Japan presented deposit No. PM/12/303 in Sep. 24, 2012 to the Secretary General with reasonings that included a brief history of Senkaku Islands, China filed an information to U.N. commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf emphasizing legal claim of extended economic zone under the U.N. convention and asked U.N. not to interfere with its "internal affairs."

The U.N. Secretary General had been informed about the resurging dispute of the Senkaku Islands in 2012, according to the associated spokesperson during the Daily Press Briefing on September 13. Later in 2013, the Secretary General recognized the dispute as regional; thus, he

did not take any active actions upon this issue. The Secretary General spokesperson had announced several times that this should be handled through regional agreements. Currently, the United Nations is working towards keeping the balance between national sovereignty and peace.

Possible Solutions

Possible solutions differ based on the countries represented. If countries are pro-China, solutions will tend to lean to the belief that Senkaku islands belong by China, and the same case applies to nations who consider Japan or South Korea as the proper owner of the islands.

There are, however, many nations who remain neutral. Consequently, a peaceful solution through means of soft power or implementation using hard power, becomes necessary and should be considered by delegates. The separation of the islands is also a plausible solution in a peaceful resolution.

Bloc Positions

Japan: The Meiji Restoration was what first brought about the Senkaku islands, where the Japanese first claimed the islands in 1879. There was much question about whether or not this land belonged to China in the first place because of its proximity to the Chinese empire.

However, Japan decided to officially claim it theirs in 1895. They believe that it is in their best interest to keep hold of it because they first laid the official recorded claim.

China: China has begun to recognize that the Senkaku islands is rightfully theirs, seeing as how it has its history tied to the Chinese Dynasties. Officially, in 1971, a new map was procured in which China had its territory bounds around the Senkaku Islands.

South Korea: South Korea has a somewhat more neutral stance, being concerned more for the regional stability. In 2011, it was officially stated by Hyun Dae Song that the constant conflict between the two will ultimately ruin stability and bring conflict.

Taiwan: Taiwan also believes that it has claims to the islands. As of 1971, they obtained a map with their territorial boundaries around it. This also brings up the dispute of the relationship with Taiwan and China, and whether this land is to be considered originally China's; but with the recent split between the two, it creates a pressing argument on who is the rightful owner between the two.

Points to Consider

- 1.) What determines which nation has sovereignty over the islands?
- 2.) Should ownership of the islands be determined or should actions to relieve tensions (but may delay the determination of ownership) be implemented first?
- 3.) How should tension be relieved: through soft power, or hard power?
- 4.) How should ownership of the islands be determined? Through history or control?
- 5.) How is the conflict affecting the international community and what incentive is there for nations to seek a rapid resolution?
- 6.) How is this conflict affecting relations among the parties who hold interest in it?
- 7.) Has there been any violation of universal human rights during the course of the conflict?

Helpful Links

- 1) <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-11341139>
- 2) <http://www.historytoday.com/joyman-lee/senkakudiaoyu-islands-conflict>
- 3) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/24/obama-in-japan-backs-status-quo-in-island-dispute-with-china>
- 4) <http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2013/12/economist-explains-1>
- 5) <http://www.ibtimes.com/senkaku-island-dispute-japan-builds-controversial-radar-station-yonaguni-island-100-miles-1573902>
- 6) <http://thediplomat.com/tag/senkaku-islands/>
- 7) http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/view_from_chicago/2014/02/the_senkaku_or_diaoyu_islands_where_world_war_iii_could_start_because_of.html
- 8) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/senkaku-islands>
- 9) <http://www.worldreview.info/content/senkaku-islands-tensions-drive-russia-and-japan-closer>

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- "Senkaku Islands Dispute." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 31 Aug. 2014. Web. 01 Sept. 2014. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Senkaku_Islands_dispute>.