

**UC Davis Model United Nations Conference 2013**  
**Committee – Security Council**  
**Topic: East China Sea Tensions**



## Introduction:

The islands known as the Senkaku Islands in Japan and as the Diaoyu Islands in China have caused a stir in East Asian politics for the past few months. These islands are being claimed by three different nations, but Japan states they have sovereignty over the islands and technically they own them. Late in September 2012 the Japanese government finalized their purchase of the islands, being purchased from a private Japanese owner. This event helped reignite the argument over these islands and caused a number of protests in China. Relations between Japan and China have since been damaged, and many Japanese companies had to stop their production in China due to relations deteriorating. Many talks have occurred since the purchase of the islands that reignited the issue of the islands. The United States as well as the United Nations has encouraged Japan and China to hold talk and try to come to a peaceful solution.

Japan claims to have documents and paperwork that state the islands fall under their jurisdiction, but China refuses to acknowledge that these documents exist. It is not known whether China or Taiwan have any documents stating that they own the islands. These islands are not populated, but the main reason as to why they are a great asset is because there is a rich oil field surrounding the island. It is also said that there are some minerals on the island that these nations might be interested in.

Recently, Japan has applied for a few other islands to become UNESCO World Heritage sites, both the Amami Islands and the Ryukyu Islands are on the list. Once the Japanese government got a hold of the Senkaku Islands it was decided that they would be included with the others to try and make them a World Heritage site. This move has

infuriated the Chinese stating once again that Japan has no right to claim these islands and does not want UNESCO to grant the Japanese their request.

It is stated on the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) website that the U.S. originally had ceased power over the islands sometime after WWII. It was mentioned that while the U.S. had control of the islands the Chinese never contested the issue. The question that comes to mind is why the Chinese decide to contest the islands now, when there was a multitude of occasions beforehand. The U.S. later returned the islands to the Japanese after signing a peace agreement. The MOFA website also states that on multiple occasions the islands have been published in atlases, maps and other media, being shown as part of Okinawa. On numerous occasions the islands have been documented as being owned by the Japanese.

It is difficult for China and Taiwan to say they rightfully own the Senkaku islands because they do not really provide any proof. Japan, on the other hand, provides documentation and evidence to back up their claims of owning the islands. It is also questionable as to why China has waited until recently to begin contesting Japan's claim over the islands. It is also not clear if China and Taiwan are claiming the islands together or if each one has a separate claim over the islands. In the past few months both the U.S. and the U.N. have encouraged China and Japan to come to a peace agreement, but none has been reached yet and ties between the two nations have gone sour.

Below I provide a list of questions for you to think about, and I also provide a few helpful links to conduct more research on the subject.

## Questions to Consider:

- If China didn't claim the islands before, why now?
- Why does China claim the islands, do they have proof?
- Does Japan provide documents for their claim of the island?
- Who was the private owner, and how did he come to own the islands?
- How does UNESCO feel about the request to make these islands a World Heritage site?
- How has the U.S. gotten involved with this issue?
- What proof does Taiwan have on their claim of the islands?
- Are Taiwan and China working together to have joint claim over the islands?
- Are Taiwan and China making separate claims for the island?
- Other than oil, are there any other resources located on or near the island?
- What are some ways this issue can be solved?

## Resources:

- [http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/senkaku/qa\\_1010.html#qa02](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/senkaku/qa_1010.html#qa02)
- <http://www.tokyotimes.com/>
- <http://bbc.com>
- <http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/jp>