



## Chinese Announcement of the Air Defense Identification Zone – What Follows? by Yoichiro Sato

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China last month announced it had established an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea that broadly overlaps with Japan's ADIZ and includes the territorial airspace over the Japan-controlled Senkaku Islands, to which China has claimed sovereignty. The Chinese ADIZ also overlaps South Korea's ADIZ over the ROK-controlled Ieodo (called Suyan by China) Reef, to which China also has a claim. The United States, Japan, and South Korea all rejected the Chinese ADIZ. On Nov. 25, two B-52 bombers left Guam and flew through the China-declared ADIZ in defiance of the Chinese demand for a prior notification. Now what follows?

First, the Chinese declaration of the ADIZ per se does not alter who controls this airspace or the Senkaku Islands themselves. Chinese does not have the capability to enforce an ADIZ deep into the East China Sea against the United States and Japan. Nor does the ADIZ enhance China's legal claim to the Senkaku Islands. Sovereignty over the air and maritime spaces derive from sovereign control of the land, and not vice versa. Setting precedence of air and maritime patrols around the Senkaku Islands would not amount to a sufficient challenge to Japan's record of administrative control.

Second, over the long term, China would naturally wish a capability to enforce the declared ADIZ, but at the moment its main intention is political. Taking an aggressive stance specifically against Japan is driven primarily by China's domestic politics. China's "peaceful rise" and a "new major power relationship" are relevant to its relations with the United States, but not Japan. While encouraging investment from and trade with Japan to sustain China's economic growth, its pro-capitalism leaders have defended themselves against domestic political opponents by taking a tougher diplomatic stance against Japan after Tokyo's decision to nationalize the Senkaku Islands in September 2012.

China's efforts to differentiate its stances toward Japan and the United States to drive a wedge between those allies are visible in the ways the ADIZ is defined and its implementation pronounced. China's demand that all airplanes flying through the ADIZ provide prior notification did not differentiate China-bound and transiting commercial flights. China successfully dared US carriers with extended service to Southeast Asian destinations via Tokyo to comply with its demands, while the Japanese government instructed its national carriers to defy the Chinese request. On Nov. 29, Chinese Air Force spokesperson Shen Jinke announced that Chinese fighter planes scrambled against two US and 10 Japanese military planes. The *Global Times*, a tabloid paper

under the influence of the Chinese Communist Party, praised the calm response by the Chinese government and noted that the United States would not be targeted as long as it "does not go too far," according to a *Reuters* report. Shen Jinke's announcement did not specify whether the two US planes entered the ADIZ, while alleging the 10 Japanese planes did. Japanese defense sources denied that the Japanese military planes were subjected to monitoring by the Chinese planes without confirming or denying Japanese flights into the China-declared ADIZ took place. An anonymous US defense official was quoted in the same *Reuters* report saying only US military planes have continued flying in the zone. The Chinese message to Japan is a warning against increased patrol sorties by Japan into the zone. The message to the United States is reassurance that China does not intend to challenge US "freedom of navigation and overflight." The message to its domestic audience is that China has improved its air defense against the Japan.

It is not likely that the Chinese government would retract the gist of ADIZ-related demands, although minor modifications through discussions with the United States and South Korea are possible. Agreeing on demarcation with South Korea's ADIZ would earn China a diplomatic victory vis-à-vis Japan. Exempting flights through the zone by commercial airliners from the pre-notification requirement would give the United States diplomatic credit, while allowing China an honorable retreat. Adjustments with Japan's interests have to be sought in a more informal manner due to the high political tension between the two countries. Face-saving for the Chinese leadership is the key to reducing present tension. It is unlikely that Japan would stop patrolling the overlapping part of the ADIZ, including the airspace around the Senkaku Islands. However, limiting the number of patrol sorties is possible as long as China reciprocates.

Chinese military planes have entered the Japanese ADIZ and prompted scrambles by Japanese fighter planes. Chinese flights into the now overlapping part of the ADIZ are old news to the Japanese as long as their frequency does not rise. However, Chinese planes must absolutely avoid the territorial airspace over the Senkaku Islands. Furthermore, inside the overlapping part of the ADIZ, China has to commit itself to not forcing the Japanese planes to divert or land. The absence of accidents despite numerous scrambles by the Japanese against Chinese incursions reflects the skills and the nonaggressive procedures followed by Japanese pilots. Chinese fighter pilots must be properly trained to avoid an incident like the collision with a US EP-3 plane in 2001 over the South China Sea.

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