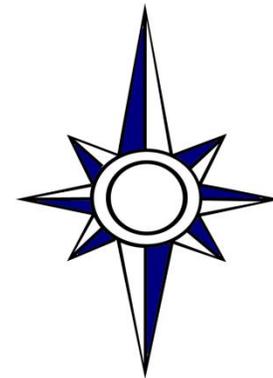


Comparative Connections

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Japan-China Relations: Staying on a Test Course

James J. Przystup*
Institute for National Strategic Studies
National Defense University

Citing his November meeting with Premier Li as evidence, Prime Minister Abe found relations with China improving in his Diplomatic Report to the Diet. Chinese officials took a more cautious view. While acknowledging progress, China's ambassador to Japan called attention to unstable elements in the relationship and Foreign Minister Wang Yi accused Japan of "double dealing" in its relations with China. Issues related to the East China Sea and the South China Sea continued to trouble the relationship. Chinese Coast Guard ships made incursions into Japan's territorial waters in the Senkakus while Japan continued to strengthen its military presence in Okinawa and the southwest islands. The foreign ministers met at the end of April.

State of the relationship

Prime Minister Abe Shinzo began the year by presenting his Diplomatic Report to the Diet on Jan. 4. Citing his meeting with Premier Li Keqiang as primary evidence, Abe reported that bilateral ties should improve under the framework of the mutual beneficial strategic relationship, but that the two sides needed to add momentum to sustain the present course. He also noted that many countries were concerned with China's efforts to change the status quo in the South China Sea. In a policy speech to Diet on Jan. 22, Abe characterized China's peaceful rise as a "great chance for Japan and the world." Bilateral relations were improving and both Japan and China bore great responsibilities for regional peace and prosperity. Through the development of friendly relations, Japan and China would meet the expectations of the international community.

Meanwhile, China's ambassador to Japan and China's foreign minister were voicing somewhat less optimistic views. In the Feb. 25 foreign edition of the *People's Daily*, Ambassador Cheng Yonghua found a "sensitive and fragile" aspect to the relationship remained. Citing Japan's pending national security law, Cheng said some people were using China's maritime activities and defense programs to hype a "China threat." He argued that China's maritime activities, in both the East and South China Seas were justified and that both Japan and China should keep differences of opinion under control and to respect each other's mutual interests. At a late-March press conference at the embassy, Cheng acknowledged that relations were improving but observed that the impetus was still weak and unstable elements continued to exist.

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During the National People's Congress on March 8, Foreign Minister Wang Yi told a press conference that Japan was guilty of "double dealing." Wang observed that "On the one hand, Japanese government leaders say nice things about wanting to improve relations, on the other hand, they are making trouble for China at every turn.... This is what I would call a typical case of double dealing." Wang felt "little ground for optimism," adding that Japan's leaders have taken "the wrong approach to history." He urged Japan to consider well whether it would regard a rising China as a "friend or enemy." The foreign minister also addressed China's South China Sea activities, emphasizing that "In building defense facilities on our island and reefs, China is actually exercising the right to self-preservation and self-defense under international law." Wang continued that "China is not the first country to have deployed weapons in the Nansha islands, we are not the country that has deployed the most weapons and we are not the country that conducts the most military activities."

Japan's annual Cabinet Office's Public Opinion Survey on Diplomacy, which was released in March, showed that those feeling "not close" to China hit a record high 83.2 percent, an increase of 0.1 percent over the previous survey. Those feeling "friendly" to China remained unchanged at 14 percent. As for the state of the relationship 9.5 percent said that they were "good" or "somewhat good"; 85.7 percent responded that they were "not good."

Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued the 2016 Blue Book on Japan's foreign relations on April 18. Addressing the bilateral relationship, it states that "Japan and China are neighbors across the East China Sea. They have an inseparable relationship characterized by close economic relations and people-to-people and cultural exchanges. At the same time, they have numerous political and social differences, so friction and disputes inevitably arise ... precisely because they are neighbors ... individual points of contention should not be allowed to affect the relationship as a whole." Among the points of contention, the document noted that "Chinese government vessels continued to make incursions into Japanese territorial waters around the Senkaku islands.... China made repeated incursions into Japanese territorial waters in 2014, sending government vessels into the waters surrounding the islands 32 times over the course of the year (88 vessels in total.)"

In Beijing, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson responded that "China has indisputable sovereignty over the Diaoyu Dao and affiliated islands, and the Nansha islands and adjacent islands." Noting that Japan's Blue Book recognized a stable bilateral relationship as critical to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region, the spokesperson observed that "if Japan genuinely wishes for stable China-Japan relations and regional peace, it should match its words with actions by stopping hyping up maritime issues and making irresponsible remarks...." On April 20, China's *CCTV* reported that a Chinese national had been sentenced to seven years for spying – providing "military secrets." The spying involved taking pictures and gathering intelligence on Chinese Coast Guard and military facilities in Zhejiang province, facing the Senkaku Islands, between November 2012 and December 2013, allegedly at the request of unnamed "foreigners," and an unnamed "intelligence agency." Accompanying video footage showed a Japanese town and images of Japanese currency. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide responded that Japan does not engage in spying.

Finally, the Yasakuni Shrine served once again as a source of contention. On April 21, Prime Minister Abe sent a *masakaki* offering to the shrine to mark the Spring Festival. The following day a 92 member supra-party delegation, led by Cabinet minister Takaichi Sanae, visited the shrine. Commenting on the visit, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson asked Japan to “deeply reflect on its invasion history” and make a “clean break with militarism.”

High-level contacts

There were several bilateral contacts among senior officials in the early months of 2016. In most cases, these contacts were characterized as follow-ups to the Li-Abe meeting in November. On Feb. 29, China’s Assistant Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyou met Deputy Foreign Minister Sugiyama Shinsuke in Tokyo. Echoing Prime Minister Abe, Sugiyama said that both countries need to exert greater efforts to move the relationship forward. Given the many outstanding issues between them, Sugiyama underscored the importance of the forthcoming discussion. Kong agreed and also raised the possibility of a future meeting between State Councilor Yang Jiechi and National Security Advisor Yachi Shotaro. During the meeting, the two sides took up issues relating to the East China Sea, the South China Sea, and North Korea. Regarding China’s island-building in the South China Sea, Sugiyama expressed concerns over their possible military use and observed that China’s conduct was raising tension throughout the international community. Despite differences, both sides agreed that “overall relations are improving.”

According to the website edition of China’s *Environmental Times*, former Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio told a visiting Chinese delegation on April 3 that Japan bore responsibility for worsening bilateral relations and that Japan should stop fanning the China threat, reflect on its past aggression, and “must apologize.” On April 7, the *Sankei Shimbun* reported that Hatoyama had been awarded an honorary professorship at Sian University’s School of Communications.

In mid-April, Kono Yohei, chairman of the Association for the Promotion of International Trade, led a business delegation to Beijing. Unlike 2015, the Japanese delegation did not meet Premier Li Keqiang, but with Vice Premier Wang Yang on April 12, a day after the G7 foreign ministers met in Hiroshima. The Japanese media interpreted the meeting downgrade as an indication of China’s dissatisfaction with the G7 communiqué’s reference to Chinese activity in the South China Sea. In the meeting, the Japanese delegation worked to advance the high-level economic dialogue agreed to by Prime Minister Abe and President Xi in November. While expressing support for the role of commerce in advancing the bilateral relationship, Wang expressed reservations about scheduling a high-level dialogue, observing that China had to “assess the direction of Abe’s politics. By being used by Abe’s politics, we cannot let our people become confused.” There was no agreement on a date to resume an economic dialogue.

On April 25, Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio, in a speech delivered to Yomiuri International Economic Society in Tokyo, told his audience that “I am deeply concerned that the relationship between Japan and China could be a house built on sand.” He put maritime issues in the East and South China Seas on the top of his agenda for his April 30 meetings in Beijing, observing that “Not only Japan but also Asia-Pacific countries and the international community are concerned about China’s unilateral actions to alter the status quo in the East and South China Seas, under the country’s goal of becoming a maritime power.” He also expressed concerns

about China's "rapid and opaque increase in its military expenditures." Addressing the coming visit, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson expressed hope that Japan would "match its words with its actions," adding that Japan, as a country outside Southeast Asia should not, at the behest of certain countries, take actions that do not support regional stability.

Security

Both sides of the relationship continued to characterize the other as a threat to its security. Both also sought to increase military capabilities, especially in the areas of surveillance, air defense, and maritime security. In early March, Japan's National Institute for Defense Studies released its 2016 China Security Report. The report noted the growing activities of the PLA Navy in the Indian Ocean and western Pacific are aimed at increasing operational capabilities in distant seas and that the PLA's growing capabilities, the modernization of air and naval forces, intelligence and cyber capabilities, will continue to challenge the US military presence in the region.

In Japan, the Ministry of Defense announced on Jan. 31 that the Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF) had scrambled fighters to intercept Chinese *Y-9* surveillance and *Y-8* early-warning aircraft over the Sea of Japan, although the Chinese aircraft apparently did not enter Japanese airspace. Meanwhile, the JASDF also deployed 10 additional *F-15* fighters to Okinawa in the process of creating the new 9th Air Wing. Based in Naha, the wing's 40 fighter aircraft are focused on defense of Japan's southwest islands. On Feb. 23, the *Sankei Shimbun* reported the deployment of two large Japan Coast Guard (JCG) ships, *Izena* and *Aguni*, to the Senkaku Security Exclusive Unit at the 11th Regional Headquarters in Okinawa, making it the largest JCG unit in terms of personnel. On April 5, the JCG announced that its unit dedicated exclusively to the defense of the Senkaku Islands and attached to the 11th Regional Headquarters, had reached full complement with the arrival of 10 newly constructed patrol boats and two helicopter-carrying patrol boats. The patrol boats are armed with 20mm cannons and remote-controlled water cannons.

On March 28, the Ministry of Defense established a 160-man Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) observation unit on Yonaguni Island – Japan's southwestern-most island – with the aim of increasing intelligence gathering on Chinese ships operating in the area between Yonaguni and the Senkakus. Also to strengthen defense capabilities in the southwest islands, Japan announced that it will spend \$107 million to rebuild an observation post on Okinotorishima, Japan's southernmost island. Construction is scheduled to be completed in 2020.

In China, during the National People's Congress on March 4, the government released the 2016 military budget, projecting an increase of 7 to 8 percent, a growth rate slower the recent past. In response, Japan's Defense Minister Nakatani Gen called on China to increase transparency to dispel international concerns. He observed that defense spending stands as only one element in the military's budget. In Beijing, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson made three points regarding the defense budget: that China's defense policy is "defensive in nature," that defense spending "has always been kept at a reasonable level," and that "China has been working to increase transparency of its military."

Japan's new security legislation also received some attention by both sides. On March 22, the *Sankei Shimbun* released the findings of a *Sankei-Fuji News Network* public opinion poll on support for the security legislation, which found that 57.4 percent of respondents supported the legislation as being "necessary;" 35.1 percent thought it "unnecessary." The findings spoke to a reversal from when it was adopted in September 2015. At that time, 56.7 percent "disapproved," while 38.3 percent "approved." In Beijing, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson told reporters that "due to history, Japan's Asian neighbors and the international community have been expressing concern over this issue.... We hope that Japan could learn from history, stick to the path of peaceful development, act with prudence on military and security policies and take more actions that enhance mutual trust with its Asian neighbors and benefit regional peace and stability."

South China Sea

The relationship was also influenced by activity in the South China Sea. Japan was consistently critical of Chinese actions and supportive of US efforts to respond with freedom of navigation (FON) operations and calls for adherence to established rule of law. China was more matter-of-fact in its claims that it was well within its rights in exercising its sovereignty. Interaction began when the Chinese Foreign Ministry reported on Jan. 2 that a test flight had been conducted on one of China's land-fill islands using "civil aircraft to test whether or not the facilities met the standards for civil aviation." On Jan. 4, Foreign Minister Kishida expressed concern over the reported test flight. Defense Minister Nakatani told reporters that this will not lead to a peaceful resolution of disputes. He argued that China's actions represented another step in advancing a unilateral change in the status quo, creating a *fait accompli* that cannot be recognized and is a matter of deep concern to Japan and the international community.

Questioned about the January FON operations conducted by the US Navy, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga expressed Japan's support. He said that "China's unilateral action increases tension by changing the status quo through rapid land reclamation in the South China Sea for bases for military purposes is a concern for the international community." Therefore, "It is extremely important for the international community to cooperate in protecting open, free, and peaceful waters."

On Feb. 16, *Fox News* reported from Washington that China had deployed surface-to-air missile systems on Woody Island. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga found the report to be a matter of "deep concern." Minister of Defense Nakatani told visiting US Pacific Command Commander Adm. Harry Harris that "Japan cannot overlook China's moves to unilaterally change the status quo."

Subsequently, US media reported that China was building an advanced radar system on Cuateron Reef (Chinese: Huayang Jiao; Philippines: Calderon; Vietnam: Chau Vien) in the Spratly Islands. China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson told reporters that "the reef you mentioned is an indisputable part of China's territory. Construction by China on its own territory is totally within China's sovereignty. By deploying limited and necessary defense facilities ...China is exercising the right of self-preservation granted by international law...." Reports of the deployment of PLA aircraft soon followed. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga told a Feb. 24 press conference that "we are seriously concerned by China's attempts to make this a *fait accompli*."

China's actions represent "attempts to change the status quo unilaterally that will heighten tension" and are "unacceptable."

On March 6, Sansha City Mayor Xiao Jie announced that commercial flights to and from Woody Island would begin in the near future, a move seen in Japan as an initiative to strengthen China's claims to the Paracels. On the front page of the English version of the *China Daily*, Ambassador Cheng cautioned Japan against raising tensions in the South China Sea by joining others in attempts to contain China. Japan, he wrote, is not a party to disputes in the South China Sea.

In mid-March, Japan's Foreign Ministry released a video on its website, *The Rule of Law at Sea*. The video does not mention China by name but opens with shots of China's island-building projects in the South China Sea. A narrator informs viewers that "While there are concerns in the international community about attempts to unilaterally change the status quo at sea, Japan has been providing seamless support, ODA, defense equipment cooperation and capacity building to help improve sea protection capabilities while calling for strict adherence to the principles of the rule of law." On March 11, Japan released its foreign aid white paper, which emphasized the importance of its relations with ASEAN, maritime security, the rule of law, cyber security, and peace-building measures. The document noted China's growing assertiveness in Southeast Asia and underscored the importance of the safety of the sea lanes running through the region.

Asked to confirm reports that China had deployed anti-ship missiles in the Paracel Islands, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson replied that "The Xinsha islands are China's inherent territory. China's deployment of national defense facilities on its own islands is reasonable and justified. It has nothing to do with the so-called militarization." Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga again expressed "deep concern" that China's activities in the South China Sea, large scale land-fill and the construction of facilities with military potential, represented a unilateral change in the status quo, raising tensions and concerns of the international community.

In April, the G7 foreign ministers, meeting in Hiroshima, adopted a joint statement expressing opposition to "threats, pressure, and provocations to unilaterally change the status quo in the East and South China Seas that increased tension in the region." Although the statement did not name China, the Foreign Ministry responded with "strong dissatisfaction toward the G-7," charging that "Some countries keep hyping up or fabricating so-called issues but regional countries aspiration for peace, development and stability remain unaffected. If the G-7 hopes to exert influence in the international community, it should adopt an attitude of seeking truth from facts and tackle issues that the international community is concerned about." Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga commented that "Since the statement is based on the consensus of the G-7 foreign ministers and their countries, we hope all countries, including China, will take it seriously."

Senkaku Islands

There was little change in the ongoing tensions over the territorial dispute in the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. China continued to assert its rights to operate in the area while Japan continued to duly report "territorial intrusions" by Chinese ships. In Japan, beyond the redeployment of air and ground assets to the Southwest region, there was increased talk of deploying Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) ships to provide a more robust response to Chinese activity. On Jan.

12, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga announced that the government is considering deployment of MSDF ships to the Senkakus to deal with Chinese incursions into Japan's territorial waters for other than "innocent passage" operations. He added that the government had made its concerns known to Beijing in November through diplomatic channels following a PLA Navy surveillance ship's activities in waters around the Senkaku islands. The same day, Defense Minister Nakatani announced that, under domestic law, he can order the JMSDF to engage in maritime policing operations in the event Chinese ships intrude into Japan's territorial waters "when the police or the Coast Guard are having a difficult time responding to a situation, the basic rule is that the SDF will respond to the situation." He argued that maritime policing activities are different from "defense operations." Three situations can trigger a maritime policing operation: 1) an armed foreign group illegally landing/occupying Japanese territory; 2) a foreign warship entering Japanese waters; 3) an attack on a Japanese civilian ship in international waters.

China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lei responded on Jan. 13 that "The Chinese side has the right to carry out normal navigation and patrol in territorial waters of the Diaoyu Dao. We advise the Japanese side not to take any provocative actions and ratchet up tension. Otherwise they will face all the consequences." The *Global Times* carried an editorial warning that deployment of the JMSDF could trigger deployment of the PLA in response. On Jan. 15, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson confirmed that China would begin to survey the Diaoyu islands to "safeguard China's maritime rights."

In mid-March, there was another exchange when the China's National People's Congress Work Report on March 13 made reference to a 2014 incident in the Diaoyu Islands involving a Chinese fishing boat and a ship under Panamanian registry as being adjudicated by China's domestic maritime court under Chinese administrative law. The following day Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga announced a diplomatic protest, making clear that from the "perspective of international law and history, the Senkaku Islands are part of Japan's sovereign territory." On March 15, Foreign Minister Kishida added that the incident actually took place in "international waters," had nothing to do with the rights of coastal countries, and nothing to do the Senkaku Islands.

Meanwhile, Japan reported the following intrusions by Chinese vessels in the region:

Jan. 3: *Haijian 31241, 2401, 2166* and *2101* operate in Japan's contiguous zone near the Senkakus. *Haijian 31241* appears armed with a machine gun and is a converted PLAN frigate.

Jan. 8-10: *Haijian 31241, 2401* operate in Japan's contiguous zone. On Jan. 8, the ships enter Japan's territorial waters and operate there for approximately 100 minutes, the first territorial incursion since Dec 26.

Jan. 12-16: *Haijian 31241* and *2401* operate in Japan's contiguous zone near the Senkakus.

Jan. 27: *Haijian* ships enter Japan's territorial waters near the Senkakus.

Jan. 28-30: Chinese maritime research ship 14 operates in Japan's EEZ near the Senkakus.

Feb. 4: *Haijian 31241* and *2305* enter Japan's territorial waters near the Senkakus.

Feb. 9-12: *Haijian 31241, 2102, and 2305* operate in Japan's contiguous zone near the Senkakus.

Feb. 17: *Haijian* ships enter Japan's territorial waters near the Senkakus.

March 2-7: *Haijian 31241, 2308 and 2506* operate in Japan's contiguous zone near the Senkakus.

March 16: *Haijian 31241, 2308 and 2506* enter Japan's territorial waters near the Senkakus.

March 18-22: *Haijian 2102, 2401 and 31239* operate in Japan's contiguous zone near Senkakus.

March 19: Chinese maritime research ship found operating without prior notification and approval in Japan's EEZ northwest Okinawa.

March 27-30: *Haijian 2102, 2401 and 31239* operate in Japan's contiguous zone near the Senkakus. The ships enter Japan's territorial waters near the Senkakus.

March 27-April 11: *Haijian 2101, 2307 and 31241* operate in Japan's contiguous zone near the Senkakus. On April 6: *Haijian 2101, 2307 and 31241* enter Japan's territorial waters.

April 14: *Haijian 2101 and 2307* operate in Japan's contiguous zone near the Senkakus.

April 17-24: *Haijian 2305, 2337, and 31239* operate in Japan's contiguous zone near the Senkakus. On April 24, the ships enter Japan's territorial waters, the 11th incursion in 2016.

Chronology of Japan – China Relations January – April 2016

Dec. 31, 2016: China's Ministry of National Defense announces plans to build two aircraft carriers in Dairen shipyards.

Jan. 2, 2016: China's Foreign Ministry reports civilian test flight to land reclamation site in the South China Sea.

Jan. 4, 2016: Prime Minister Abe Shinzo presents report on Japan's diplomacy to the Diet.

Jan. 9, 2016: Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio holds telephone conversation with Chinese and Russian counterparts to coordinate response to North Korean nuclear test.

Jan. 17, 2016: Jin Liqun, president of China's Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, announces that the bank is open to Japanese and US participation.

Jan. 18, 2016: Japanese media report coordination underway to resume Japan-China high-level economic dialogue, agreed to by Prime Minister Abe and President Xi Jinping in November, 2015. The meeting would be the first in five years.

Jan. 18, 2016: Prime Minister Abe, during Upper House Budget Committee meeting, congratulates Tsai Ing-wen on her election as Taiwan's president; he looks to strengthening Japan-Taiwan ties.

Jan. 19, 2016: Foreign Minister Kishida announces his intention to visit China in the spring.

Jan. 20, 2016: China's Ministry Commerce announces a 25.2 percent drop in Japanese investment in China to \$3.21 billion in 2015.

Jan. 22, 2016: Prime Minister Abe's policy address to the Diet.

Jan. 31, 2016: Japan's Ministry of Defense announces Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF) scramble against Chinese aircraft over the Sea of Japan.

Jan. 30, 2016: Japanese, Chinese, and Korean ministers of education meet in Seoul.

Feb. 1, 2016: Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide announces that Chinese authorities arrested Japanese citizen on charges of spying; he says Japan does not engage in spying.

Feb. 4-8, 2016: Chinese intelligence-gathering ship operates in international waters off Japan's Boso Peninsula.

Feb. 29, 2016: China's Assistant Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyou meets Japan's Deputy Foreign Minister Sugiyama Shinsuke in Tokyo.

March 3-14, 2016: China's National People's Congress meets in Beijing.

March 4, 2016: China releases 2016 defense budget during National People's Congress.

March 6, 2016: Sansha City mayor announces commercial flights to and from Woody Island.

March 11, 2016: Japan releases Foreign Aid White Paper, emphasizing ASEAN and sea lane security in Southeast Asia.

March 8, 2016: US 7th Fleet, Philippine Navy, and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) hold consultations in Manila.

March 14, 2016: Foreign Ministers Kishida and Wang Yi confer by phone on DPRK sanctions.

March 19, 2016: Prime Minister Abe attends Coast Guard graduation ceremony in Maizuru, becoming the first prime minister to attend Coast Guard graduation.

March 21, 2016: Japan-China vice-ministerial dialogue on agriculture resumes in Beijing after six-year hiatus.

March 24, 2016: Former Prime Minister Fukuda meets Foreign Minister Wang on sidelines of Boao Forum in Hainan. They agree on the need to take steps to improve relations.

March 24, 2016: Xiamen municipal government hosts investment seminar in Tokyo. During 2015 Chinese municipal and provincial governments held 49 investment seminars in Japan, an increase of 49 percent over 2014.

March 25, 2016: Abe Cabinet approves appointment of Yokoi Yutaka as ambassador to China.

March 28, 2016: Japan establishes observation unit on Yonaguni Island.

March 29, 2016: Abe government's new security legislation goes into effect.

April 3-6, 2016: Two Japanese destroyers, the *JS Ariake* and *JS Setogiri*, and the submarine *Oyashio* make a port call to Subic Bay.

April 5, 2016: Japanese and Chinese diplomats meet in Tokyo to discuss North Korea sanctions. China is represented by Wu Dawei, Beijing's representative to and chair of the Six-Party Talks.

April 7, 2016: Former Prime Minister Hatoyama appointed honorary professor at Sian University of Communications.

April 7, 2016: Three PLA Navy ships transit in international waters between Okinawa and Miyakojima.

April 10-11, 2016: G7 foreign ministers meet in Hiroshima.

April 11, 2016: Japan's Fair Trade Commission and China's Ministry of Commerce sign memorandum agreeing to share information of mergers and acquisitions and to meet annually.

April 12, 2016: Japanese business delegation led by Kono Yohei meets Vice Premier Wang Yang in Beijing.

April 12, 2016: JMSDF destroyers visit Cam Ranh Bay. Defense Minister Nakatani Gen emphasizes importance of the freedom to the seas to Japan's security and commits Japan to working with the US and Australia to support peace and stability in the region.

April 12, 2016: JMSDF destroyer *Ise* participates in international naval review off Padang, Indonesia.

April 15, 2016: Japanese government releases 750 new documents substantiating Japanese claims to Takeshima and the Senkaku islands. China's Foreign Ministry responds that the Diaoyu Dao and affiliated islands are China's inherent territory...sovereignty ...is fully backed by historical and jurisprudence evidence."

April 15, 2016: China's Ministry of National Defense confirms visit of Gen. Fan Changlong, vice chairman of the Central Military Commission, to several land-reclamation sites in the South China Sea.

April 17, 2016: *Xinhua* reports that a Chinese military aircraft landed on Fiery Cross Reef to evacuate suddenly ill workers to a hospital site.

April 19, 2016: Kitaoka Shinichi, head of Japan's International Cooperation Agency, tells television audience that China, through militarization of sites in the South China Sea, is slowly working by a show of force to change the status quo in the South China Sea.

April 18, 2016: Japan issues Diplomatic Blue Book.

April 20, 2016: JASDF aircraft scramble against Chinese reconnaissance aircraft over international waters between Okinawa and Miyako Island.

April 21, 2016: Prime Minister Abe sends offering to Yasukuni Shrine during the Spring Festival. China asks Japan to "deeply reflect on its invasion history" and make "a clean break with militarism."

April 22, 2016: A 92 member supra-party delegation of Diet members' led by Cabinet Minister Takaichi Sanae, visits Yasukuni Shrine.

April 22, 2016: Japan announces first flight of unarmed prototype stealth jet.

April 25, 2016: Japanese Coast Guard seizes Taiwanese fishing boat in Japan's claimed EEZ in the vicinity of Okinotori Island.

April 28-29, 2016: LDP General Council Secretary Nikai Toshihiro visits Beijing, meets high-level Chinese officials, and attends China-Japan-Korea International Forum.

April 29, 2016: Taiwan protests Japanese Coast Guard seizure of Taiwanese fishing boat in the vicinity of Okinotori Island; China supports Taiwan's protest.

April 29-30, 2016: Foreign Minister Kishida visits Beijing and meets Foreign Minister Wang and Premier Li.