



# Is the US trying to instigate a Japan-China proxy war? (Part One)

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**Author's note:** *This is the first of a three-part series*

## Introduction

The US Secretary of State John Kerry recently assured Japan's Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida that the US would provide military assistance to Japan in the event of a military confrontation with China.

Referring to the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the US and Japan on Friday, Kerry gave assurance that the US would not abandon Japan in the event of a conflict with China.

"The United States neither recognizes nor accepts China's declared East China Sea [Air Defense Identification Zone] and the United States has no intention of changing how we conduct operations in the region," Kerry said.

The statement comes amid growing tensions between China and Japan after China declared an air defense zone over an area of the East China Sea to which Japan lays claim.

Kerry's comments on Friday were the latest among previous statements that Chinese analysts have interpreted as growing evidence that the US is seeking an opportunity to use the Japanese to instigate a "limited conflict" as part of effort to curb China's growing power in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Chinese have protested US actions in the East China Sea region in the past, with the state-owned Xinhua news agency and the Communist Party affiliated Global Times denouncing the US, accusing it of seeking to destabilize the region.

Chinese analysts have always argued that the major cause of rising tensions in the Asia-Pacific region is the US "pivot" policy. They argue that US moves to strengthen military alliances and buildup military presence close to its territorial borders leave China with no options but to take

more proactive self-defensive measures, such as trying to establish early warning systems by declaring an air defense zone over an area that includes the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyou islands.

Doug Bandow, Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute and former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan has argued in line with the Chinese analysts that as a growing power, China's increased concern about "offshore defense strategy" especially in the face of US "pivot" policy is legitimate.

In the circumstances of US intervention in the region, China has legitimate reasons to seek measures to "engage any potential enemy farther away from its thriving cities."

Bandow argued that Washington's interest in the region are not as immediate and urgent as China's and that China's move to establish an "offshore defense strategy" is consistent with the threat it faces in the circumstances of buildup of US military presence in its backyard.

Of course, if you look at the situation in the East China Sea region from the Western perspective, it is easy to forget the fact that the US is the outsider in the region and not China and that thus the responsibility falls first on the US as the outsider to exercise restraint.

The onus also falls on the US to justify its presence in the region and not for China to justify self-defensive measures it adopts in its own backyard.

To take for granted US claim that its presence in the region is "stabilizing" is to overlook these basic facts, even after the historical and geopolitical factors have been taken into account.

Kerry's latest statements follow a previous comment by the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, in which he compared the growing tensions between Japan and China to Britain and Germany before World War I.

It also comes after Benigno Aquino of the Philippines compared China's claims in the region to Nazi demands in the 1930s.

The recent comments by the US and its allies have raised a flurry of speculation among Chinese and Western analysts whether they could be considered hints that the US is seriously considering the option of a "limited conflict" as part of a strategy to setback or degrade China's nascent naval capabilities.

In recent times, more than ever before, US defense analysts have been urging US military to consider a detailed war plan against China.

Recently, US defense analysts told the House Armed Services' Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee that the Pentagon should embark on a major build-up in preparation for a possible conflict with China.

According to Seth Cropsey, a senior fellow at The Hudson Institute, "Chinese leaders are ambitious and they are moving toward great power status. The US is not taking this possibility as seriously as it should."

These comments from US analysts appear to underscore a growing conviction that ultimately the US would have to confront China militarily and that the earlier a conflict the better for the US that still enjoys a great naval advantage over China.

With the gap in naval military capability between the countries narrowing every day, the US military faces increasing temptations to provoke an early confrontation while Chinese capabilities are still nascent and weak.