Senkaku Islands Dispute Escalation

Two weeks ago the US Secretary of State publicly said that the United States did not seek to contain China with respect to its claims in the South China Sea. Two days ago, several boats with Chinese activists attempted to land on the main island of the Senkaku archipelago. Although it is unclear exactly what happened, the Japanese patrols’ effort to detain them resulted in multiple deaths of Chinese citizens. Yesterday, there were mass anti-Japanese protests in several major cities in China, including threats to the embassy in Beijing. The Chinese government has accused Japan on forcibly occupying Chinese territory and now murdering Chinese citizens. It has ordered the mobilization of naval forces to “secure the region”. The Japanese government insists on its legal possession of the islands and while it deplores the unfortunate recent incident, it maintains its right and obligation to defend its territory. It has ordered the Japanese Self-Defense forces to protect the islands. You are directed to formulate United States policy. You are to analyze military and diplomatic options (or some combination, even possibly inaction), which may be unilateral, multilateral through an ad hoc coalition, or multilateral through the United Nations and/or ASEAN. You will assume that all present signs indicate that if left unchecked, the conflict will almost certainly escalate into conventional war, which might activate the US defense treaty with Japan.

Research and Analysis

Your memo should begin with an introduction summarizing the few major points of your analysis that you want your busy readers to take away (Executive Summary). In the background section (Background of the Problem) frame the problem from your client’s perspective (e.g., the President of the United States) by tracing its history up to the present. This section should be as concise as possible. Next, present your assumptions about the preferences of the players involved. Enumerate the options available to your client and predict their consequences (Options and Analysis). This section is the longest and most important: you should list options that you will not be recommending, and you should carefully evaluate possible consequences (good and bad) of each alternative, including an assessment of their relative likelihoods of success. You must make full use of the strategic tactics we have discussed in class. Finally, weigh the alternatives from your client’s perspective, and recommend a course of action (Conclusions).

Mechanics

The memo should be typed, and at least 10 (but not more than 12) double-spaced pages long. You must endnote major sources of information and provide a bibliography. These do not count toward the page limit. The memo must use a font size of 11 points, and margins of 1 inch all around. Submit a cleanly printed copy. It will be graded using the criteria on the course website.

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1 You may use Wikipedia in the course of your research but you must verify all information obtained there from other sources. You must scrupulously credit other people’s ideas if you decide to use them in any way. You need not cite the lecture notes for the theoretical arguments.