

**Research note**

**The “East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone” of the People’s Republic of China: Its Strategic Significance in Light of Growing Regional Tensions**

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**Summary**

China established the East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone (ECS ADIZ) on 23 November 2013. It includes the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands and its founding met with strong reaction from both Japan and the United States of America. In this context, the US has reaffirmed defense commitments toward regional allies while Japan continues to revise its constitution and strengthen its defense capabilities. The dispute on ECS ADIZ escalated the tensions within a regionally competitive environment characterized by the newly emerged assertiveness of China and Japan and by the US “pivot to Asia.” The geographical extension of the ECS ADIZ’s borders predominantly corresponds with Chinese military calculations. This paper shows that the establishment of the ECS ADIZ came about as a result of China’s longstanding regional security concerns and was of a military nature. It did not enforce territorial claims. Establishing a military presence in an East China Sea previously dominated exclusively by Japan and the US shows China’s new self-confidence in its own military capabilities. The controversy aroused by different views on the ECS ADIZ reflects the countries involved conflicting military strategies, as well as the potential that major powers in the region geared to deny or enforce access have.

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