

US report raises questions over cross-strait ties

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A handout photograph taken on Thursday and released by the Japan Coast Guard shows a coast guard vessel, right, spraying water at a Taiwanese boat, bottom left, after the latter ventured near the disputed Diaoyutais, in the East China Sea.

Photo: AFP

A new report from the Congressional Research Service (CRS) raises a potentially difficult question for Taipei about its current relationship with Beijing.

“One issue for US policy concerns trends across the Taiwan Strait since 2008,” says the report, made public on Monday.

The report asks whether Taiwan’s moves to grow closer to the People’s Republic of China (PRC) have “created a greater willingness” in Taipei to cooperate with Beijing on issues “in which it sees their interests as aligned.”

In particular, the new report — entitled *Maritime Territorial Disputes in East Asia* — suggests that the US Congress should examine Taiwan-China cooperation in the East China Sea.

“Some analysts argue that there is an issue for US policymakers surrounding whether Taiwan coordinated with the PRC in asserting sovereignty of the Senkaku Islands [Diaoyutai Islands (釣台)] against Japan amid rising tension in September 2012,” the report says.

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Dolven and Mark Manyin, the report is likely to get special attention from the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

The report says China has urged cooperation over the islands to advance cross-strait ties, but, to date, Taipei officials have denied cooperating with Beijing.

“Even without explicit coordination, the parallel actions of the PRC and Taiwan in the current East China Sea flareup have added pressure against Japan,” the report says.

It says that both China and Taiwan have deployed government patrol ships and military assets that have “raised concerns about the potential for accidental collisions and the escalation of tensions.”

On Sept. 25 last year, Taiwan deployed 12 coast guard ships that escorted 60 fishing boats and fired water cannons at Japan’s patrol ships.

“Furthermore, Taiwan dispatched military systems sold by the United States during the incident,” the report says.

The US Congress will face many questions arising from maritime territorial disputes in East Asia, the report adds.

The sovereignty disputes themselves are so difficult and raise such wide-ranging issues for US policy that managing them will touch on congressional oversight of US President Barack Obama’s diplomatic actions in Asia, it says.

The report says that Congress will have to consider the Obama administration’s military posture and budgets, and “its search for ways to limit the potential for conflict and create a more stable environment in the region.”

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