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[Programmes: Newsday](#)

Presenter in Singapore: ... Japan's foreign minister Koichiro Gemba was in the UK today and in a BBC interview with Babita Sharma, he defended the government's decision to purchase the islands as a pragmatic one.

FM Gemba: There is no doubt Senkaku Islands are clearly an inherent territory of Japan in light of historical facts and based upon international law. To put it simply, it was not until 1971 that China and Taiwan started to claim territorial rights over the islands only after the United Nations released a report in 1968 indicating the existence of petroleum resources in the surrounding areas.

Babita Sharma: The decision to nationalise the islands now... why was that move sought by the Japanese government? Was it not the case that the provocative plan outlined by the Tokyo governor forced your hand in this matter?

FM Gemba: The reason behind our government's decision to obtain ownership of the islands is the Tokyo governor's intention to purchase them. He had been publicly advocating his grandiose plans to utilise the islands. We believed such a move would have brought a negative impact in Japan's relations with China.

BS: Given the situation that your government finds itself in today where clearly there is a negative situation unfolding; an international diplomatic stand-off, a dispute between Japan and China, was it wrong to block the governor's plans? Was it a mistake on the part of the administration?

FM Gemba: We have to consider what would have happened if the government didn't purchase the islands. The owner of the islands had already made it clear that he had decided to sell the islands to someone. Under such circumstances, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government would have probably bought them.

BS: But my question was was it a mistake on the part of the Japanese government to block the plans by the governor, given the fact that of the diplomatic situation you find yourself in now, the international dispute unfolding with China, was it a mistake?

FM Gemba: The situation could have been much worse if the government didn't buy the islands. I believe that Governor Ishihara would have landed on the islands by now. Therefore our action was the pragmatic one. I believe it's extremely important to calm down the situation in a peaceful manner, but of course Japan cannot concede what it cannot concede.