

The Sino-Japanese Standoff and International Politics

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It is always difficult to guess on which side the camel will sit but the recent statement of Japanese Liberal Democratic Party's Secretary General, Nobuteru Ishihara, has given quite clear signals from Washington. Ishihara said: "Our relations with China are at their worst ever since the normalization of relations between the two countries. It is precisely because the US-Japan alliance is shaken that neighbouring countries keep entering Japan's territory and Japan's peace and safety have come under great threat."

It is pertinent to mention here that relations with Washington had also turned hostile after the ruling Democrats took power in 2009. The ongoing tension between China and Japan over the Diaoyu Islands flared up last month when on intelligence input from Washington Japan detained Chinese activists who had landed on the islands.

This led anti-Japanese protests in China followed by a political statement from Tokyo that they intend buying the islands from a Japanese businessman. If we recall, on 16 April 2012, Tokyo's Governor Shintaro Ishihara during a speech at the Heritage Foundation, a think-tank in Washington, issued a statement that the Tokyo Metropolitan Government is negotiating with the owner of three major islands in the uninhabited chain.

The present standoff has been conspired with to realize in Japanese political circles the necessity of the alliance with the US. If we critically examine the latest developments we will arrive at the conclusions that it was the presence of the US' most advanced submarines in the Philippines' Subic Bay this month which generated alarms in Beijing while the Japanese action regarding the detention of Chinese was taken as part of the plan.

The expanding US' submarine presence in the region, especially on bases in Guam, Japan and Hawaii, coupled with movement on Subic near the Chinese Navy's southernmost submarine base on the side of a cliff on Hainan Island was something that required monitoring.

Beijing did what it had to do but both Japan and China should not come to the point of no return.

In fact it is third countries that are playing their game in the region. Washington benefit from the present standoff in three ways. Firstly, due to Chinese commitments to put her own house in order, the US' Navy presence in Arabian Gulf and Indian Ocean would remain undetected, which may pose a threat to Iran.

Secondly, it would also provide a chance to the anti-China bloc to win geo-strategically important countries like Maldives to its side, directly or through its partners like India.

And thirdly, it would distort the international image of Japan as well as China, which will help India to contest a United Nations Security Council seat quite comfortably.

In fact, Western nations have completely backed capitalist India as a third world playboy for the US in the Asian region. In the recent move involving the navy buildup in Indian Ocean against Iran, China being a veto-wielding power has international obligations and Beijing must remain current on day-to-day movements in the Arabian Gulf and Mediterranean Sea.

The present Chinese standoff with Japan would not allow its navy to move to the other side of the world and monitor US-Israeli moves. Indians also got a life time opportunity to mend its fence with the Maldives in order to isolate China. To counter Chinese influence in the Maldives, Indian Defence Minister AK Antony is on a three-day visit to Male in connection with the inauguration of a military hospital and foundation stone-laying ceremony at the Training Academy of the Maldivian National Defence Forces. In another development, Japan's ambassador-designate to China, Shinichi Nishimiya, died on 16 September 2012.

Doctors were looking into the cause of his death. He was in mid-October to take over from Uichiro Niwa as Japan's ambassador in Beijing. The latest setback in long-troubled relations between China and Japan is due to Washington's instigation and assurance to some politicians of support against Beijing.

As the tensions between the two powers increased, Washington gained a golden chance to cash this opportunity to further isolate China and Japan.

The dispute over the islands is not only distorting the international image of both countries but is also militarily weakening them in favour of countries ambitious to emerge as new powers in the region.

There is no doubt that, being a strong supporter of cooperation between regional countries, one also needs to comprehend that India's invitation to Western powers on Asian land and waters would be no wise step. Japan's decision to buy the disputed islands seems to be a political decision rather than Tokyo's ambitious plans against China.

The magnitude of the tension between the two nations has grown so out of proportion that Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda had to ask Beijing to ensure the safety of Japanese citizens and businesses amid growing anti-Japan demonstrations. New Delhi's interference

in the internal affairs of smaller states in South Asia left Male in chaos.

It is the wisdom of the Maldivian leadership to agree on early elections, otherwise the US had been pressuring the Maldives to hold elections at the end of 2013.

The fact cannot be denied that Washington always looked for tackling single individuals as compared to negotiations with elected representatives.

To conclude, if the tension continues, Japan will be forced to pull out its nationals from China and vice versa.

Such moves will only benefit the enemies of Japan and China who want to establish their hegemony in the region.

It is high time that both countries agree on bilateral talks to ease the tension, as further escalations are neither in the interest of the two countries or for global peace.

Edited by Rick Rozoff, Stop NATO

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