

September 27, 2010

Dear Prime Minister Naoto Kan,

We would like to advance our views on the responses regarding the recent collision between the Chinese fishing boat and the Japan Coast Guard patrol vessels near the Senkaku Islands of Okinawa Prefecture and to suggest the immediate challenges the government should deal with in the attached “Opinion Paper.”

“Opinion Paper to the Kan Administration: Proudly Fly the Flag of National Interest, and Steer towards Strategic Diplomacy”

Interested DPJ Diet Members
September 27th, 2010

1. Introduction

The conclusion of the collision incident involving the Chinese fishing boat off the coast of the Senkaku Islands is a national crisis matching that of the Triple Intervention after the Sino-Japanese War. As Japanese politicians—or rather, as Japanese citizens, this is nothing but of great regret. However, at the same time, we believe that the current administration is not entirely responsible for this outcome. In other words, it was a crisis brought about by overall Japanese politics itself, which had neglected a strategic response to a rising China and had lacked determination to reject unreasonable challenges against our national territories.

Therefore, we will not amount to a simple criticism of the current administration. Of course, we realize that there are rising criticisms among our citizens that the government is being “weak-kneed” and “submissive.” At the same time, it is not difficult to imagine that there was information of which only the government had knowledge in arriving upon this difficult decision. Even so, the series of responses taken by the government on this matter with the intention of averting a crisis cannot help but make us deeply anxious that serious troubles will remain in the future in at least three different ways.

2. The Three Concerns upon the Resolution of the Incident

First of all, the prosecution, which must enforce law based solely on the law and evidence, should never, fundamentally, make highly political decisions such as the “future Japan-China relations.” Therefore, there are very few citizens who believe that the prosecution, which belongs to the executive branch, independently made this decision without a political determination of wills, and with the Cabinet including the Prime Minister repeating that it was “the prosecution’s decision,” it will be unable to avoid the criticism that such comments are an act of shifting the blame. In this manner, the fact that pressure from China has warped the domestic order of law may, in the future, negatively affect law enforcement in similar cases.

Secondly, to resolve a case like this one, it was necessary to consider, in addition to the short-term aversion of a crisis, a mid-to-long-term creation of maritime order in the East China Sea; however, we must state that the government had a weak perception regarding this point. A non-transparent settlement, as a result, could be taken as a failure of Japan to reject China’s straight-out denial of Japan’s possession of the Senkaku Islands which is a historical fact. In particular, ASEAN countries, which have faced pressure from China in the South China Sea in recent years, would have been paying close attention Japan’s response to the incident and must be deeply disappointed in this conclusion.

Third, when we look back at reports in the international media of the past couple of weeks, especially in relation to international public opinion, we should have pressed for an understanding of the legitimacy of asserting our claim of the islands and our series of measures involving domestic order of law, but it is highly regrettable that there was a decisive lack of efforts in public diplomacy to capture firm support.

3. Future Challenges

The end result sharply reflects the reality of our national power and the lack of a strategy towards China. We must acknowledge that we were forced to pay for our long abandonment of the weak effective-control of the Senkaku Islands, our excessive dependence on China for the supply of rare earth metals and the market, falling back on the abstract slogan of “mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests” and our failure to construct a specific engagement strategy against the growing economic power and influence of China from a long-term perspective.

Hence, as a lesson of “Gashin-Shotan” (an old saying that one must sleep on firewood and lick that bitter taste of liver for the sake of vengeance), we would like to propose a list of challenges that our government must address as a priority.

- Establish a comprehensive security system:
With the Prime Minister’s Office at its core, we must promptly establish a system to plan and implement a comprehensive security strategy that includes five pillars: military security, economic security, resources and energy security, food security and intelligence security. We must, especially, and immediately strengthen our self defense capabilities of our nation in parallel with deepening the Japan-US alliance.
- Establish an engagement strategy with Russia, ASEAN and Central Asia:
It is obvious that we must maintain our friendly relationship with China; yet, in order to avoid excessive dependence on China and to check against China (as a policy of “Enko-kinko,” an old saying that one should make friends with the far to fight your neighbors) we must also promptly and strategically coordinate with Russia through the conclusion of a peace treaty, and through Siberia-Sakhalin development and cooperation on assistance towards Central Asia. We must also enhance assistance of infrastructure building and investment promotion towards ASEAN, which could become an alternative to the “world factory” of China.
- Fundamentally review the Japan-China relationship:
Against the Chinese government, who has maintained an outrageous and unfaithful attitude such as demanding apologies and compensation even after the release of the captain, we must demand the immediate release of the four private citizens who are detained and lift all counter measures, and at the same time, take this opportunity to reconsider the specific meaning and content of the “mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests” between Japan and China.
- Diversify supply risk of strategic resources:
We must strengthen our stockpile system of rare earth and other resources and at the same time, promptly design and implement a resources and energy security strategy. Furthermore, we must promptly file suit to the WTO if we can confirm that there is indeed a Chinese embargo against Japan on rare earths and other resources.

- **Strengthen defense system in the southwest Japan:**
We must consider further strengthening our defense capabilities towards our southwestern islands centered on the island of Okinawa, through the process of reviewing the National Defense Program Outline and through discussions on deepening the Japan-US alliance. In addition, we must consider strengthening our maritime patrol system by the JMSDF (and the US Navy) and the Japan Coast Guard. Furthermore, we should hold a Japan-US joint military exercise near the Senkaku Islands as soon as possible.

- **Strengthen an effective control over the Senkaku Islands:**
We should amend the current system of leasing the private land from a private citizen and have the country purchase it as a state-owned land, and begin building lighthouses, warning surveillance radars and other facilities.

- **Establish maritime order in the Western Pacific:**
In order to secure the freedom of navigation in the East China Sea and the South China Sea where sea-lanes of regional countries go through, we must begin to establish an international framework regarding maritime order through cooperation with the US, ASEAN, South Korea, Australia among others.

- **Establish a mechanism of crisis management between Japan and China:**
We must establish a mechanism of management for dialogue for times of crisis between Japan and China, and establish a system to prevent incidental accidents on the seas and to avoid hazards.

4. Conclusion

This incident has sharply questioned us about our dignity as a nation. We are indeed at a time when we should not criticize our government's handling needlessly, but rather, on the basis of "Gashin-shotan," aspire to become an independent country with dignity for years to come.

43 interested members

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