

Thank for Support, Protest against Provocations

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Prime Minister Naoto Kan has mobilized 100,000 of Japan's 240,000 strong Self-Defense Forces for rescue and reconstruction mission following the Great East Japan Earthquake that has inflicted unprecedented damage on Japan. He has also mobilized 6,000 SDF reserves for the first time in the SDF's history. It is natural for the government to make all-out efforts to address the national crisis. But the mobilization of nearly half the SDF troops in eastern Japan should not lead the government to fall short of defending the entire Japan including the Northern Territories and the Southwestern Islands.

Particularly, we must pay attention to China and Russia. We heartily thank them for providing support for Japan's fight against the disaster. But statesmen must always remember that the protection and promotion of national interests is the principle of international politics.

Unusual approach by Chinese and Russian aircraft

Russian military aircraft approached very close to the Japanese airspace twice after the disaster. On March 17, an electronic reconnaissance plane flew close to Japan. So did a fighter and an electronic warfare plane on March 21. The aircraft of the Russian Air Force might have tested air defense capabilities of Japan plagued with the unprecedented disaster. Interceptors of the Japanese Air Self-Defense Force scrambled to successfully prevent the Russian planes from violating the Japanese airspace.

China has not terminated its provocative actions in the East China Sea. On March 26, a helicopter on a maritime survey ship of China's State Oceanic Administration flew to a point at an altitude of 60 meters and a horizontal distance of 90 meters from the Isoyuki destroyer of the Maritime Self-Defense Force and circled around the ship. In a similarly flamboyant action in April 2010, a Chinese Navy helicopter flew very close to the MSDF Asayuki destroyer that was monitoring the Chinese Navy's large-scale drills near the so-called median line between the Japanese and Chinese exclusive economic zones in the East China Sea.

Irrespective of Japan's huge earthquake and tsunami damage, China has maintained its attitude of demonstrating its power in waters close to the Japan-controlled Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea and around the

Southwestern Islands including Okinawa. There has been no change in the Chinese and Russian strategies of taking advantage of military forces to push national interests and claims.

New FM fails to distinguish between national and personal affairs

In response to the Russian actions close to the violation of the Japanese airspace, New Foreign Minister Takeaki Matsumoto indicated that he trusted Russia's kindness and would not file any protest. "Our stance is that we deal with Russia while trusting the kindness of Russia that has offered its sympathy and assistance to Japan."

He has failed to distinguish between national and personal affairs. Prime Minister Kan once said, "We would like to pursue open national interests." Regrettably, however, national interests in international politics are not open. Each country's national interests are rather closed. Neither the prime minister nor the foreign minister understands the international community's common sense that any country gives top priority to its own national interests.

Takashi Uto, a House of Councillors lawmaker from the Liberal Democratic Party who has once served the ASDF, has pointed out that the concentration in eastern Japan of nearly half the SDF troops, already cut in size, could affect the defense of the Northern Territories and Okinawa. Therefore, the Japanese government should send its clear political message, and should not hesitate to sternly protest against China or Russia.

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