

## **Noda Leaving Senkakus Untouched Is Not Qualified to Remain in Power**

Yoshiko Sakurai

Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda plans to leave the Senkaku Islands untouched while deciding to nationalize the islets. He is likely to limit his actions to nationalizing the islands and refrain from taking the most required action to develop a craft basin for Japanese fishing boats and communications facilities to demonstrate Japan's sovereignty on the islands. Apparently detecting the Noda plan, Tokyo Gov. Shintaro Ishihara has begun to make remarks indicating he would reverse his earlier offer to provide the central government with some 1.4 billion yen in contributions citizens have made to the Tokyo metropolitan government for its planned purchase of the islands.

### **Japan must establish sea and air control**

Behind the prime minister's unusually hesitant attitude has been pro-China forces' resistance to any strong policy against China. Deputy Prime Minister Katsuya Okada, Foreign Minister Genichiro Gomba and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, known as MOFA, have been exerting pressure on Noda to refrain from taking any strong attitude against China. They remain afraid of China and give top priority to preventing any bilateral frictions, sidelining Japan's national interests and territorial defense.

Seabed resources around the Senkakus are promising, representing Japan's precious treasure. The islets are surrounded by rich fishing grounds. A radar site, if built on the Senkakus' highest mountain that is about 360 meters high, may serve to substantially expand Japan's network of surveillance on China.

The Senkakus are important because of their strategic location as well as the rich marine resources. At a time when China apparently has an ambition to deprive Japan of the territory, therefore, Japan must nationalize the Senkakus and take successive measures to enhance its surveillance on the islands and surrounding waters and establish sea and air control in the waters.

### **MOFA-led diplomacy sidelining national interests**

Nevertheless, the Noda administration is considering cutting defense spending. While China's military threats are prompting many Asia-Pacific countries to proceed with their military expansion, Japan alone is stupidly reducing defense outlays. The prime minister's pledge to respond resolutely to China seems empty.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government's survey of the Senkakus on September 2 allowed Japanese citizens to know the fact that seven water sources and falls exist on

Uotsuri Island, the largest among the Senkakus. The fact was confirmed through a survey in 1979 during the Ohira administration period. But MOFA kept the fact secret, fearing that people getting aware of the sufficient water sources for living on the island could try to approach the islet, said Hiroyuki Kurihara, a relative of the owner of the island.

Japan's MOFA-led diplomacy with China ignores Japan's national interests and amounts to putting the cart before the horse. Noda has failed to control Okada and Gamba working with MOFA forgetting Japan's national interests and inclined to further reduce defense spending. He may not be able to take any effective action not only on the Senkaku issue but also on other key challenges such as the Takeshima and northern territory issues. It is no longer meaningful for such prime minister and his party to remain in power.

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