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EDITORIALS

Japan's defense report a ruse

NOT SURPRISINGLY, CHINA HAS AGAIN FEATURED in Japan's annual defense report released on Tuesday.

To justify Tokyo's ambition in the region, the Defense of Japan 2012 report plays up its concern over China's military, including Chinese naval vessels' activities in the Pacific Ocean. It says China is likely to expand maritime activities, and conduct operations and training as routine practices in waters near Japan, which Tokyo is increasingly worried about.

Given the report's logic, every move China makes to build its navy and defend its land and waters may be at fault in the eyes of the Japanese. Such prejudice is nothing but a feeble attempt to propagate the outdated "China threat" theory.

As a country with a vast territory and long coastlines, China is fully justified in enhancing its military capabilities. Because of the complicated environment China faces today, it is important that the Chinese military, the navy included, is able to respond timely and effectively to potential threats to its sovereignty, security and territorial integrity.

China is committed to a defensive national defense policy, and its military buildup will not pose a threat to others. The Ministry of National Defense highlighted the notion again at a news conference on the eve of Army's Day, which falls on August 1.

Japan's concern over China's military activities is unnecessary. As an important player in the Asia-Pacific region, Japan should instead show greater commitment to regional peace and stability.

As a major document stating Japan's view of its security environment and its defense policy, the annual defense report should have sent a more fair-sounding message to the outside world, especially its neighbors in Asia.

Asian countries are feeling increasingly worried about the rising influence of Japan's rightists on its defense policy, which has made the country stretch the limits of its constitution. Japan has also become more aggressive in its maritime territorial disputes with neighboring countries, including China.

It has even tried to meddle in the South China Sea issue. Instead of trying to ease the tension there, Japan has done a lot to intensify it. On Monday, for example, a report quoting the Japanese embassy in Manila said Japan would supply 12 boats to the Philippines, which has a recent maritime territorial dispute with China, in 2014 to improve the surveillance capability of the Philippine coast guard.

This Japanese trend does not bode well, for it is at odds with the generally peaceful environment in the region.

For a stronger private sector

PREMIER WEN JIABAO'S CALL TO OPEN UP THE economy further to private investors is a reminder that we have a lot more to do to provide a level playing field for the private sector. Wen urged the country during Monday's executive meeting of the State Council to fully implement the policies encouraging the private sector's growth.

Admittedly, the government has been increasingly aware of the importance of the private sector and has devised a series of policies to facilitate the growth of private enterprises. It issued a landmark policy to support individual and private business owners in early 2005. Since then, a number of regulations have been issued to make the policy a success.

But private enterprises still complain of facing obstacles when they try to enter certain fields, prompting the government to tackle the problem.

We need not doubt the sincerity of the government in ushering in more non-State investors into such important and profitable areas as energy and finance, but we are yet to see more measures to ensure that the private sector gets the same treatment as its State and foreign counterparts.

Despite the policies and regulations being in place, private investors often encounter difficulties in getting them fully exercised. This is the reason for their complaints.

As a legacy of the planned economy, the State sector is favored. And it is a fact that over the past two decades, foreign investors have been welcomed to build the local economy. Private businesses do not need preferential terms; what they need is simply fair treatment.

For example, individual and private businesses account for about 10 percent of the total short-term lending of the country's banks. But the private sector generally generates more than half of the country's GDP and accounted for nearly 96 percent of new jobs created in urban areas in 2009.

The private sector is especially important for the national economy when the country's GDP growth is slowing amid global economic uncertainties.

But it should not be only an expedient choice to support the sector's faster growth. Considering the long-term health of the national economy, the government should expedite its efforts and translate its promises into concrete benefits for the private sector.

CONTACT US

China Daily
15 HuiXin Dongjie
Chaoyang, Beijing 100029
News:
(86-10) 6491-8366
editor@chinadaily.com.cn
Subscription:
(86) 400-699-0203
sub@chinadaily.com.cn
Advertisement:
(86-10) 6491-8631
ads@chinadaily.com.cn
Phone app:
chinadaily.com.cn/iphone

China Daily USA
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800
New York, NY 10036
(001) 212 537 8888; editor@chinadailyusa.com

China Daily Hong Kong
Room 1818, Hing Wai Centre
7 Tin Wan Praya Road
Aberdeen, Hong Kong
(00852) 2518 5111; editor@chinadailyhk.com

China Daily UK
90 Cannon Street
London EC4N 6HA
(0044) 0207 398 8270; editor@chinadailyuk.com

CHINA FORUM | XU HUI AND MENG FANLI

Military buildup most normal

China will stick to the path of peaceful development and remain committed to maintaining peace and stability

This year is destined to be one of the most important in the history of China's pursuit of peaceful development.

Internally, the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China will elect a new leadership later this year, and thus inject new vitality into China's reforms.

Externally, neighboring countries with territorial disputes with China are taking advantage of the United States' strategy of accelerated "return to the Asia-Pacific" to create trouble with China in an attempt to infringe upon China's territorial sovereignty.

Under the garb of "maintaining regional stability" and "keeping

its commitments to allies", the US has increased pressure on China by rearranging its forces deployed abroad, holding joint military exercises with its allies, as well as supplying weapons to regional countries and issuing diplomatic statements. Turning a blind eye to the remarkable economic and political progress China has made over the past years, the US has mobilized its machinery of opinion to overstate various "uncertain factors" in China.

As a result, China faces numerous internal and external problems, which threaten to end the three-decade-long peace and development momentum in Asia and turn it into the most dangerous region in the world.

That territorial and maritime

disputes among countries in the Asia-Pacific region exist is an indisputable fact. Compared with Europe, Africa and West Asia that have experienced wars and violent conflicts since the end of the Cold War, countries in the Asia-Pacific region have not only managed to appropriately handle their disputes, but also achieved unprecedented peace, prosperity and stability.

"Shelving disputes for common development", a great strategic concept put forward by Deng Xiaoping, has contributed immensely to the realization of peace and development in Asia-Pacific over the past decades. The region has also benefited from China's reform and opening-up policies and its unremitting efforts to build good cooperative ties with neighboring countries.

Over the past 30-odd years, East Asian countries have made full use of their geographical adjacency, cultural likeness and similar economic development models to build win-win interdependence. From a long-term perspective, regional countries can continue their development, and find ways to resolve their territorial disputes only by enhancing mutual trust, eliminating their security dilemmas and pushing forward East Asian integration to maintain prosperity and stability in the region.

Any attempt to force the region's countries to give up their viable development models and instigate them to resolve mutual disputes as soon as possible in defiance of their historical and real conditions will be an irresponsible and impractical act. If such shortsightedness does not change, it could turn Asia-Pacific into another Middle East, a result that would by no means be in the interest of any East Asian country.

Some countries in the region wrongly assume that a stronger China, thanks to its fast economic development, will try to establish its hegemony. They not only doubt China's commitment to peaceful development, but also see China's development through the tinted glasses of the Cold War.

In the era of globalization and complex interdependence, coordination and cooperation remain the only way of promoting national development and maintaining national security. China's road of

peaceful development is by no means an expedient choice. Instead, it is an inevitable choice that not only serves China's interests, but also the interests of other countries.

In recent years, some countries have voiced concern over China's normal military buildup and used it as a pretext to doubt Beijing's commitment to peaceful development. They argue that the military buildup will cause it to abandon its previous commitments to resolve disputes with neighbors through peaceful means. Such arguments are made either with ulterior motives or to misinterpret China's history, culture and national defense policy.

China's military development is aimed at maintaining its sovereignty and territorial integrity and undertaking international responsibilities, not at seeking hegemony.

Facts prove that improved military capability has not made China prioritize the use of force in its foreign policy. On the contrary, China has never used force against any country in the past three decades. And compared with other permanent UN Security Council members, China has sent more troops to UN peacekeeping missions.

Recent territorial disputes with neighboring countries have once again made China face some international criticisms and controversies. However, a majority of the world's countries have shown good understanding and supported China's military development and foreign policy.

Many senior military officers from neighboring countries have praised China's concept of "harmonious world" and "harmonious society" and backed its policy of "non-alignment, non-confrontation and not targeting a third party". They also appreciate Beijing's self-restraint in territorial disputes and believe this to be the key to the stability and development of the Asia-Pacific region over the past three decades.

In such circumstances, China should ignore the clangor created by certain countries and continue its long-cherished commitment to maintaining peace and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region.

Xu Hui is a professor and Meng Fanli a lecturer at the PLA National Defense University.



GAI GUIBAO

Scientific approach to build well-off society

Editor's note: Party General Secretary Hu Jintao addressed the opening session of a workshop for officials at the ministerial and provincial level on July 23. The following is a People's Daily commentary on the speech:

Party leader Hu Jintao's address at the opening session of a ministerial workshop on July 23 was a political declaration for China to adhere to socialism with Chinese characteristics, and provides the guidelines for it to get adapted to the requirement of the times and the wishes of the people.

It is an important political task for the 82 million Communist Party of China members to carefully read and understand the spirit of Hu's remarks with a high degree of political consciousness and sense of responsibility to unite thoughts with actions.

Hu penetratingly analyzed the new situation and new tasks facing China, systematically summarized the great practices since the 16th National Congress of the CPC, scientifically stated some important problems pertinent to the Party and the whole nation, and incisively provided solutions to a series of theoretical and practical problems for the development of the Party and the nation.

"We should hold high the great banner of socialism with Chinese

characteristics, use Deng Xiaoping Theory and the important thought of the Three Represents as a guidance, thoroughly implement the Scientific Outlook on Development, unswervingly get along on the socialist road with Chinese characteristics and struggle for the construction of a well-off society in an all-round way," Hu stressed. This is an overall requirement raised by the Party for its own work and the work of the nation based on changed national, Party and world situations as well as people's new expectations.

To fully grasp and implement the overall requirement, we should hold high the banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics. In an era of drastic changes in domestic and overseas situations, the kind of banner we will hold will decide the success or failure of our socialist cause. Practices fully demonstrate that socialism with Chinese characteristics is a banner of progress and development for contemporary China as well as a banner for unity and hard work of the Party and Chinese people of all ethnic groups.

It is under this banner that the Party has led the Chinese people to create one miracle after another over the past 30-odd years since the reform and opening-up began.

To understand and implement

the overall requirement, we should consistently stick to our development road and enhance our consciousness and determination to implement the Scientific Outlook on Development.

The achievements China has made over the past decades — from its remarkable economic and social progress to the obvious improvements in people's living conditions, and from the rapid strengthening of its overall national strength to the considerable rise in its influence across the world — testify that the socialist road with Chinese characteristics is the correct path the Party and the people have chosen in their long process of practices.

Scientific development, as a distinctive theme for contemporary China, has shown its enormous power in directing China toward development and progress and thus enjoys a solid theoretical, practical and mass foundation. Only by advancing along this great road, can we strengthen our determination, take more fruitful measures and use better systems to implement the Scientific Outlook on Development and ensure that our economy and society develop well and fast.

To thoroughly comprehend and implement the overall requirement, we should strive to realize the grand

objective of building a well-off society in an all-round way. A well-off society is the Party's solemn commitment to the entire nation. It is also the common aspiration of 1.3 billion Chinese people.

We now face opportunities and challenges both, something that we have not done before. Whether or not we can firmly utilize emerging opportunities and better tackle emerging challenges will be decided by our perceptions, our work and the steps we take to carry forward reform and development. Only by maintaining an enterprising spirit, emancipating our minds and carrying forward the reform and opening-up, can we unite forces that can be united, mobilize positive factors that can be mobilized, and overcome all difficulties and risk on the road ahead.

We are now at a decisive stage of the construction of a well-off society in an all-round way. We are also on the way to national rejuvenation. We will certainly continue to find new ways to build socialism with Chinese characteristics and make new, magnificent achievements for the cause of the Party and the people if we can deeply grasp the essence of Hu's July 23 address, emancipate our minds and carry forward the reform and opening-up.