

EXCLUSIVE | XU DUNXIN

## Japan harms ties 'for own interests'

Tokyo's move of buying islands 'driven by domestic politics', former vice-minister says

By ZHANG YUNBI  
zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

Tokyo is using Washington's pivot to Asia as a chance to intensify the Diaoyu Islands issue to serve its own interests in a move that has harmed China-Japan ties, former vice-minister of foreign affairs Xu Dunxin has told China Daily in an exclusive interview.

"China-Japan relations will never be peaceful if the plot of 'purchasing' the Diaoyu Islands is not thwarted," the senior diplomat said on the 34th anniversary of the signing of 1978 China-Japan Treaty of Peace and Friendship.

Beijing and Tokyo normalized bilateral ties in 1972. Xu witnessed the negotiations that culminated in the signing of the historic 1978 treaty, which affirms in legal form the principles of the China-Japan Joint Statement of 1972.

A series of recent remarks and actions by Japan concerning China's Diaoyu Islands have escalated tensions between the two countries. Xu called for due attention to be paid to the relevant provisions of the treaty.

The joint statement and the treaty calls on both sides to "settle all disputes by peaceful means and refrain from the use or threat of force".

Xu, also former Chinese ambassador to Japan, said that in the 1970s, the two countries reached an agreement to put aside the islands issue for the sake of the bigger picture of bilateral ties.

In 1978, following the signing of the treaty, former Chinese vice-premier Deng Xiaoping visited Japan. In

response to media focus on the islands issue, Deng reiterated the consensus of shelving disputes, and he warned against any attempts to play up the islands issue to "obstruct the development of China-Japan relations".

Researchers and observers on both sides have referred to Japan's hot and cold attitude toward bilateral ties as the "pendulum effect".

Xu said the constant wavering shows Japan's "failure to keep its promises" made in the 1972 joint statement and the 1978 treaty.

Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara, a right-wing activist, announced plans to buy the Diaoyu Islands in April.

Ishihara's outspoken "purchasing plan" and his recent application to land on the islands for a so-called land survey, are just games meant to distract from his true intentions, said Xu. The moves are aimed at "breaching China-Japan ties and bringing an impact to the ruling Democratic Party of Japan", he said.

In early July, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda announced plans to "nationalize" the Diaoyu Islands, prompting China to lodge solemn representation.

According to Xu, Japan's repeated claims are farcical and harm bilateral ties. He said Japan's actions are driven by domestic politics as well as the changing international situation.

"The farcical episodes are exploiting the domestic nationalist mood and Washington's pivot to Asia to take advantage while damaging China-Japan ties. It is very vicious to bluff their



Xu Dunxin is a senior diplomat and former Chinese ambassador to Japan.

### TIMELINE

#### THE FOUR KEY POLITICAL DOCUMENTS BETWEEN CHINA AND JAPAN

##### • Sept 29, 1972

Joint Statement of the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of Japan

"The two Governments confirm that, in conformity with the foregoing principles and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, China and Japan shall in their mutual relations settle all disputes by peaceful means and shall refrain from the use or threat of force."

domestic public for support and to gain political capital," Xu said.

He warned that the moves of Ishihara and Noda are both "illegal and invalid", and do not change the fact that the Diaoyu Islands have been China's territory since ancient times.

Despite the latest turbulence, the senior diplomat placed high expectations on the momentum of bilateral exchanges in both economical and civil fields. The momentum "shows the will

##### • Aug 12, 1978

China-Japan Treaty of Peace and Friendship

The contracting parties "shall in their mutual relations settle all disputes by peaceful means and shall refrain from the use or threat of force".

##### • Nov 26, 1998

China-Japan Joint Declaration on Building a Partnership of Friendship and Cooperation for Peace and Development

Both sides affirmed that "they would work to maximize their common interests and minimize their differences,

and, through friendly consultations, appropriately handle the issues, differences of opinion and disputes which currently exist and may arise in the future, thereby avoiding any restraint or obstacle to the development of friendly relations between the two countries".

of people in both nations. Its power is considerable, and it is impossible to ruin bilateral ties with just a few tricks", he said.

"With ties developing over the past 40 years, China and Japan have been inseparable in the field of economy and trade. This year's bilateral trade volume is around 300 times of that 40 years ago," said Xu. "No one can afford to risk bilateral trade."

The two countries have become each

other's major trade partner, and Xu said they are tightly connected because of the common issues they are facing, including the European debt crisis and slumping exports to Europe and North America.

##### • May 7, 2008

China-Japan Joint Statement on All-round Promotion of Strategic Relationship of Mutual Benefit

"The two sides are committed to resolving bilateral issues through consultation and negotiation."

"China and Japan are close neighbors. We all know that a country cannot choose its neighboring countries, and the only path ahead of both countries is to learn how to get along with each other," Xu said.

### Q & A

**Q: This year marks the 40th anniversary since China and Japan normalized their diplomatic relations in 1972, and this year also witnesses a series of ups and downs in the relations. How do you view the turbulence?**

**A:** The 40 years tell us that despite the ups and downs in the past, the general picture is moving forward and development is the mainstream. As for the future, we may face more challenges. Don't be pessimistic about it. Take it seriously.

**What is the major challenge that overshadows the implementation of the four bilateral political documents, including the China-Japan Treaty of Peace and Friendship?**

When signing the treaty in 1978, both governments agreed to put aside the Diaoyu Islands issue. Yet these days, some people on the Japanese side do not want to put aside the issue anymore, and they want to benefit from it and change the current situation.

**What is your opinion on resolving the Diaoyu Islands issue?**

A diplomatic resolution through peaceful reconciliation is the only choice. Any unilateral move that deteriorates the situation will prompt objection.

**Should people on both sides tweak their mindsets when viewing their counterpart?**

We should continue to learn and draw lessons from each other, and cooperation is the choice. Japan should not be pessimistic about the fact that China's GDP has surpassed Japan's, and China should learn from Japan and enhance the quality of its economic growth.

# CTExcelbiz

China Telecom's first overseas mobile service

Superb Call Quality  
especially between UK and China

High Speed Data Service  
via one of the largest 3G network platforms in the UK

24/7 English and Chinese Bilingual Customer Hotline  
with online portal

CTExcelbiz - Your premium mobile communication service  
between UK and China