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Is US Meddling Making a China-Japan War Inevitable?

By John Glaser

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A Chinese think-tank (via Zero Hedge ^[1]) has predicted ^[2] that military conflict between China and Japan is inevitable now, thanks in part to US meddling in the Asia-Pacific region.

With the rise of China as Asia's leading economic power, a Chinese government think tank says the nation's conflict with Japan over the Senkaku Islands is inevitable at a time when its bilateral relations are changing as a consequence.

The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) also said in its annual report that the two countries' relationship will enter into a highly unstable period.

While thinking that the conflict over the islands could be prolonged, China is now paying attention to what action the new Japanese government, headed by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, will take.

The "report on the development of the Asia-Pacific region" points out that China's rapid development is raising anxieties in surrounding nations, forcing them into taking precautions and requiring them to accept the "readjustment" of the power balance.

As for the Senkaku Islands, the report explained that Japan's right-wing groups, which have gained strength through the country's two decades of a sluggish economy called "the lost 20 years," regarded U.S. policy of "pivoting to Asia" as the best opportunity to nationalize the

islands. In September, Japan purchased three of the five Senkaku Islands, called the Diaoyu Islands in China, from a private landowner.

...“Japan’s nationalization of the Diaoyu Islands destroyed the framework for keeping a balance, which means ‘shelving a conflict,’ ” a Chinese diplomatic source said.

Aggressive US meddling in the region has long been predicted to have ugly consequences, like bolstering hard-line nationalistic politicians on all sides. “Signs of a potential harsh reaction are already detectable,” a recent CSIS report said ^[3]. “The US Asia pivot has triggered an outpouring of anti-American sentiment in China that will increase pressure on China’s incoming leadership to stand up to the United States. Nationalistic voices are calling for military countermeasures to the bolstering of America’s military posture in the region and the new US defense strategic guidelines.”

The US role in this and various other Asian territorial disputes is not one of a neutral player trying to avoid escalation. Rather, the US has pursued an aggressive posture of expanding military assets in the region ^[4] and teaming up with all of China’s neighboring rivals to side with them on territorial issues in a nationalistic scheme to block China’s rise ^[5] as a world power.

A veteran Chinese diplomat warned back in October that the US is using Japan as a strategic tool in its military surge in Asia-Pacific aimed at containing China and is heightening tensions between China and Japan ^[6]. Chen Jia, who served as an under secretary general of the United Nations and as China’s ambassador to Japan, accused the US of encouraging a militaristic response by Japan. “The US is urging Japan to play a greater role in the region in security terms, not just in economic terms,” he said.

Underlying the dispute are two key factors: (1) Washington has reiterated its commitment to its mutual defense treaty with Japan, insisting that it will become involved militarily in the event of an outbreak of conflict; (2) Washington sees China ^[5] as a rising power and increasing regional influence and is willing to crush that ascent to maintain its own global dominance.

Technocrats in Washington like to call all this “maintaining stability.” As is often the case, the reality on the ground is the polar opposite of the term used to describe it. But Washington isn’t about to have its power undermined, is it?