

Japan and Its Territorial Claim

Japan's conflict with its neighbouring countries over some islands is drawing world attention. Japan persistently insists that Tok Islets of Korea, Diaoyu Islands of China and South Kuril Islands of Russia belong to its territory.

Then what is Japan's real purpose of insisting claim to these islands?

One purpose is to create favourable conditions and environment for overseas expansion by making its younger generations, who were born after the Second World War, understand that their motherland is a victim of the war.

The Japanese politicians, who had directed great efforts to building ideological foundations for reinvasion, saw that the "territorial claim" is one of the incentives that could easily develop national consciousness and ultra-nationalism among the younger generations in the work of imbuing them with the pride in their past history of invasion, revanchism against its defeat and wild ambition for dominating Asia. In particular, after the Cold War was over, Japan has made every desperate effort to hide its past crime-ridden history and give the impression that it was not an offender but a victim of the Second World War by diverting the media and international attention to its "territorial claim."

Japan is one of the main criminal states of the Second World War, which invaded several Asian countries under the cloak of "Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere" and ignited the war in the Pacific.

As a result of the world war, Japan officially accepted the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Declaration, which stipulate that it should give back the occupied territories to their former owners. But it is misleading the public opinion, saying that the "territorial claim" was caused by "wrong post-war settlement" while embellishing their past aggressive wars as wars for "self-defence and justice."

Another purpose of Japan's kicking up a racket over its "territorial claim" is to expand the sphere of exercise of its "right to defence."

Geographically, Japan is an island country with a small depth for defence. From olden times, it has employed the strategy of expanding its territory by occupying neighbouring

islands. In the past it occupied at first the neighbouring islands that are unfavourable for attack but advantageous for defence, and used them as stepping-stones for invading the Asian continent. Despite its defeat in the Second World War, it has never given up its ambition for territorial expansion, and clung to its “territorial claim” to some important islands.

From the military point of view, Japan’s claim to Tok Islets of Korea is aimed at gaining closer access to the Korean peninsula. The Japanese politicians are attempting to give the Japanese people an understanding that the islets are part of the “lost land”; in 2005 the assembly of Shimane Prefecture designated February 22 as the Day of Takeshima, and in 2019 all the high schools were allowed to educate the students that the Tok Islets belong to Japan’s territory by describing Tok Islets as Takeshima in their textbooks.

According to information, if Japan occupied Diaoyu Islands of China, it could gain maritime territory of over 200 000 km² and expand the sphere of its defence over 300km farther to the west of Okinawa. Japan also sees that if it had South Kuril Islands of Russia, it could expand the sphere of defence and block the launch of the Pacific Fleet of Russia into the Pacific Ocean.

The third purpose is that the Japanese politicians regard possession of the “disputed islands” as a vital issue for maintaining the country’s status of an “economic giant.”

An estimate shows that the sea areas surrounding “disputed islands” abound in oil, natural gas and rare metals. For example, the sea area surrounding South Kuril Islands is known as one of the world’s three major fishing grounds and oil, natural gas and rare metals are deposited in this area.

Analyzing that one of the main reasons why the territorial disputes which were hidden behind the curtain of the Cold War are now coming up to the surface is because of the scramble for natural resources, the Chinese magazine *World Knowledge* wrote that Japan’s claim to the “disputed islands” is based on the logic that “where there is an island, there must be a sea area and where there is a sea area, there must be an enormous amount of resources.”