

# Comment

editorials • opinion

**CHINADAILY**

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EDITORIALS

## Tokyo's ad of ill intentions

TO CONTINUE WITH ITS GAME OF "PURCHASING" China's Diaoyu Islands, Japan seems increasingly dependent on the United States' support. This month has thrown up enough evidence to that effect, which will only make it more difficult to resolve the Diaoyu Islands dispute through talks.

To further Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara's plan to "purchase" the islands, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government ran a sizable advertisement in *The Wall Street Journal* on Friday. The ad lobbied for US support and claimed the islands to be "historically Japanese territory".

Such claims do not hold water. The Diaoyu Islands were discovered, explored and named by the Chinese at least during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). In contrast, Japan can trace historical proof of its "ownership" of the islands to only 1895. In retrospect, Japan's proof is nothing but evidence of its invasion of China. It seized the Diaoyu Islands, along with Taiwan and the Penghu Islands, from the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) in the 1894-95 war between the two countries.

Nothing can change China's sovereignty over the Diaoyu Islands. Not the Japanese "evidence". Nor any intervention by a third party.

We do not believe US citizens can be easily fooled by what a Japanese ad says. But some remarks in the ad, including that the Diaoyu Islands are "of indispensable geostrategic importance to US force projection", could still strike a chord with some in Washington.

Given that the US strategic shift to the Asia-Pacific is widely seen as a move to counter China, some in Washington could use the Diaoyu Islands dispute as a stepping stone for the US to project its power in the region.

This explains why the US has been playing a double role in the issue. On one hand, it promises support to Japan overtly or covertly and increasing its military presence in the island country. On the other, it tries to appease China by saying on some official occasions that it would not take sides in the dispute.

Such strategic ambiguity could encourage some ill-advised Japanese to go further on the dangerous path. Regional peace and stability will suffer if Japan intensifies the dispute any further, which will not serve any nation's interests, including that of the US.

The US has said it is willing to build a new type of nation-to-nation relationship with China and seeks positive interaction with China in the Asia-Pacific region. It should match its words with deeds.

## Behind short films

IT SOUNDS LIKE A JOKE BUT, IN FACT, IS OUTRAGEOUS. Few can imagine spending more than 18 million yuan (\$2.82 million) on certain short publicity films. But that is what the Ministry of Railways has done.

The annual auditing by the National Audit Office has found that the ministry failed to invite bids for the films made in 2009-10.

People are shocked by the unimaginable high cost. Most of them smell corruption, and they are right.

A couple working in the ministry were investigated and about 10 million yuan in cash was found in their home. The small project is now suspected of involving kickbacks worth about 7 million yuan.

Prosecutors are now investigating the case.

True, the cultural company, which signed the contract with the ministry to make the films, sought well-known director Zhang Yimou's help and paid him 2.5 million yuan after tax. But still, spending more than 14 million yuan on some short publicity films is ridiculous.

Hopefully, the investigation will answer the following questions.

Since it is next to impossible for short publicity films to cost 18 million yuan, how could people in the ministry's publicity department get the authorities' approval to squander it?

The ministry is supposed to have an internal watchdog to supervise its financial affairs. How could it turn a blind eye to the affair?

State regulations stipulate that a government department must invite public bidding for procurement of goods or services worth than 1.2 million yuan or more. The ministry flouted the rules. Who should be held responsible for that?

The investigation needs to expose every link in the chain that made the deal possible not just to bring the corrupt officials to book, but also to identify the loopholes that allow such counter-productive things to take place.

All central government departments and their local counterparts have their respective budgets. The railway ministry case should serve as a reminder to the central government that the management of the budgets leaves much to be desired.

A small leak can sink a ship. Such corruption, if not effectively dealt with, will undermine people's confidence in the government.

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CHINA FORUM | TAO WENZHAO

# From discord to cooperation

China and US should hold dialogues to build mutual trust on human rights issues, democracy and the rule of law

China and the United States have wrapped up their 17th round of dialogue on human rights in Washington. The Chinese side presented the recent measures it has taken to improve legislation, judicial justice and people's livelihood, including amendments to the Criminal Procedure Law, development of the Internet and grassroots elections, and expansion of the social security network.

The US, however, continues to find fault with China's "restrictions on free expression and Internet freedom, on religious and ethnic minorities, and on internationally recognized labor rights". US Assis-

tant Secretary of State Michael Posner, who hosted the dialogue, said the overall human rights situation in China continues to "deteriorate".

The US' criticism is tendentious rather than aimed at seeking the truth. With the deepening of its reform and opening-up and fast economic growth, China has made great progress in democracy, improved the rule of law, and provided greater protection to civil rights (such as the rights and interests of women and migrant workers) and freedom of speech on the Internet. These are indisputable facts.

The US should know that copying American institutions and practices in totality is unsuitable for China's national conditions.

Washington and Beijing have

differences on human rights issues. The US is a country with a very strong ideology and Americans believe they are "God's chosen people" and it is the US' "manifest destiny" to transform the world with its values. By signing unequal treaties time and again in the 19th century, the US strengthened its privileges to do missionary work in China, and American missionaries have never denied their mission to "moralize" China, that is, to transform China with American values.

Promoting American values has been a US foreign policy tradition. The US will not stop passing irresponsible remarks on human rights situation in other countries, including China. And China will never tolerate US interference in its internal affairs, so the disagreement will continue for a long time.

This does not mean the two countries don't have anything in common on human rights issues. China recognizes the universal principles of human rights, and an increasing number of US citizens tend to agree with China's proposal to include the right to subsistence and development in human rights.

Since the 1990s, some American scholars have enlightened us with insightful comments on the China-US dispute over human rights.

Harry Harding, former professor at George Washington University, is one of them. He says that to get out of the impasse over human rights issues with China, the US should accept the broader definition of human rights and be patient toward China's democratization because it is a long and gradual process, which needs corresponding social, economic, educational, cultural and other conditions.

American democracy is a product of American society, Harding says, and China will develop a democratic system that Americans are not familiar with. Both countries should strive to make human rights issues an area of cooperation rather than confrontation. Unfortunately, neither country has been able to do so.

Human rights issues have long beset China-US relations. But its status in bilateral relations has changed in the past two decades. In the first few years of the 1990s, the US linked the renewal of China's most-favored-nation status to its human rights record. That pushed human rights

to the top of the agenda of overall China-US relations. The US saw it as a policy option to force China to change its policy and even its leadership. That was a distortion of bilateral relations.

Human rights issues still beset China-US relations, but they are just part of the world's most important bilateral ties. Although the two countries still have differences on human rights issues, they do cooperate in many other fields. This is a big difference compared with the situation in the early 1990s.

The US' attitude toward human rights issues has changed, too. In the 1990s, the US frequently exerted pressure on China on human rights issues. Besides raising the issues at bilateral forums, the US also used multilateral forums, including UN Human Rights Commission meetings, to criticize China.

The US' practice of raising human rights issues had once become an irritating factor in China-US ties, periodically interfering with its normal development. Only after the Sept 11, 2001 terrorist attacks did the situation start changing, for the US needed China's support and cooperation to build a global anti-terrorism front. Since then the discord between the two countries has lessened to some extent.

Also, after years of trying unsuccessfully, the US recognized that pressuring China on human rights would not work.

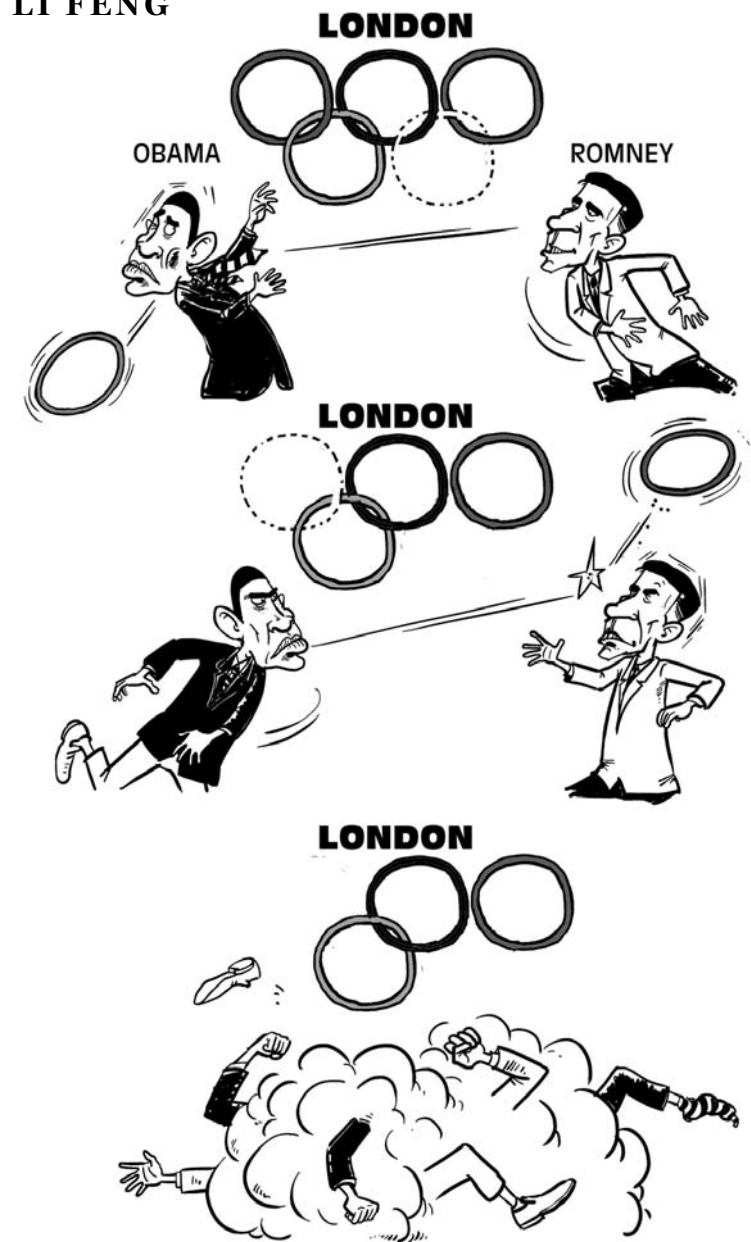
Leaders of China and the US both have reiterated in their joint statements of October 1997 and November 2009 that the two countries should address the differences on human rights issues in the spirit of equality and mutual respect. But the US has not fully implemented the statement until now.

More than 20 years of history of China-US discord in the field of human rights suggest that confrontations, instead of solving the problem, will only intensify the contradictions and weaken the overall stability of China-US relations.

Only sincere dialogue and exchange can help build mutual trust in human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and change confrontation into cooperation.

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LI FENG



CAI HONG

## Japan shining, but for the wrong reasons

Good advice is usually harsh to the ear. For proof, we need not look further than the suggestion of Japan's Ambassador to China Uchihiro Niwa.

Niwa has drawn some criticism in his country after speaking what he really thought about the Diaoyu Islands (called the Senkaku in Japan) dispute. In an interview with the *Financial Times* in June, Niwa warned that the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's plan to buy the Diaoyu Islands from their private Japanese owner could spark an "extremely grave crisis" between Japan and China.

There is now speculation in Japanese and Chinese media on whether he will have to return to Tokyo or stay in Beijing. The Japanese media reported on July 23 that the Japanese government is looking for Niwa's successor and may remove him in September. But the Japanese embassy has denied the news.

Niwa will be right if Japan goes ahead with its plan to purchase the Diaoyu Islands and causes a setback in Sino-Japanese relations.

The Japanese government has decided to "nationalize" the islets and is trying to buy them in April

2013. And Japanese Foreign Minister Koichiro Gamba has said the Japan-US Security Treaty would protect the eight islets with US consent.

Gamba issued a warning for Niwa, too, saying the Diaoyu Islands issue is a "domestic", rather than foreign, affair.

All these are driving home the message that Japan seems to be devising a new but less cooperative strategy toward China.

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda himself is in trouble, for some parliament members of the Democratic Party of Japan have resigned from the party. But he wants to change the official interpretation of Japan's right to collective self-defense, and has asked his government to consider revising the United Nations Peacekeeping Activities Cooperation Law to remove the restrictions on the use of weapons for Japan's Self-Defense Forces.

Besides, Japan has inserted words in the revised Basic Law on Atomic Energy that associate its nuclear power with its national security, which is believed to pave the way for Japan's potential nuclear armament. That means Noda is

countering his opponents by being aggressive.

In September 2009, the DPJ came to power with underlining weaknesses and without experience in governance as the financial crisis in the US and Europe hung over Japan's economy. Tokyo felt the need to improve and expand its relations with Beijing, making good use of China's robust economic development to breathe life into Japan's economy.

At the height of Japan's economic downturn, Niwa, a Sino-Japanese relations realist with decades of international trade experience, was appointed ambassador to China and given the responsibility of improving Sino-Japanese ties. He was the best choice because he was believed to be fully aware of China. It's to Niwa's credit that he also holds a seat on the Beijing International Entrepreneurs Advisory Board and is an economic adviser to Jilin and Jiangsu provinces.

In the July edition of Japan's leading monthly magazine *Bungeishunju*, Niwa said a market twice as large as Japan's economy would be visible across the sea from Japan. He recommended that Japan take advantage of China's

economic development if it wanted to become an economic power once more. The crux of Japan's recovery is China.

Nationalism is rising in Japan with China's emergence as an economic power. Jingoists do not want Japan to play second fiddle to China. As a result, Japan has come up with a China policy of ambivalence.

Japan does not define its relations with China clearly, because it lacks a clear national objective for the years ahead. When a nation is lost within itself, it does not know how to deal with others.

Twenty years ago Japan's moderate conservatives proposed to build a Japan that would be small but shining, and play an international role with emphasis on environmental protection and people's livelihood. Over the past 20 years, Japan's share in the global economy has indeed become smaller. But today's neo-conservatives have alienated themselves from the moderates, making Japan shine for all the wrong reasons.

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