

# China's aggressive stance reveals lack of coordination

TERRY MCCARTHY

THE growing tension in East Asia over China's aggressive claims to the region's oil-rich waters now delineated on maps in Chinese passports may suggest a meticulously calculated plan by Beijing to propel the country to superpower status. The reality may be more mundane lack of coordination and bureaucratic infighting.

China is determined to erase a century and a half of humiliation by western colonialists and Japanese occupiers. But without a strong leader who imposes policy from above, the country has devolved into competing centers of power at the national and provincial levels, with bureaucrats and generals dividing into factions, vying to outdo one another with nationalistic posturing.

The result of this policy dissonance, as seen in the territorial disputes surrounding islands in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, appears counterproductive to China's long-term interests. Beijing has failed to win legal arguments over control of the islands, but antagonized most of its Asian neighbors and provoked the US to focus more naval power on the seas off China's coastline.

China disputes control of the Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea with Japan, who call them the Senkakus. Beijing also claims a huge U-shaped swathe of the South China Sea, denoted by a sketched dotted line, first submitted to the United Nations in 2009. That interpretation is strongly contested by Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei who have rival claims.

China has two goals. The first is to expand its access to oil and gas reserves in disputed areas. The state-owned oil company CNOOC already pumps about one third of its total oil and gas production worldwide from undisputed parts of South China Sea and East China Sea. If China took all the South China Sea oilfields, China's Ministry of Land and Resources estimates that would satisfy China's needs for 50 years - an attractive lure for an energy-hungry economy, the second largest in the world.

At the same time, for decades, the Chinese military has wanted to establish the so-called "first island chain" of defense a doctrine under which China would seek to secure the Yellow Sea, East China Sea and South China Sea along a line of islands from Sakhalin through Japan, Okinawa and Taiwan down to Borneo, and deny access to aircraft carrier groups and military bases of the United States or other rival forces, including India. To this end China has quietly constructed military outposts on reefs and rocky outcrops of disputed islands, outfitting them with helipads, naval guns, radar and satellite communications and even some rudimentary airstrips.

For 30 years China avoided major conflict by keeping outpost-building at a low level, while simultaneously engaging in largely nonproductive territorial negotiations with neighbors.

As China weathered the 2008 recession more suc-

cessfully than the United States or Europe, some factions argued that the time had come for Beijing to flex its muscles internationally. The low-key "bide and hide" strategy of Deng Xiaoping was abruptly pushed aside. Chinese ships became more aggressive in disputed waters off its coast. In 2009 five Chinese vessels came dangerously close to a US ocean surveillance ship in the South China Sea, and in 2010 a Chinese trawler collided with two Japanese Coast Guard ships near the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, leading to anti-Japanese riots across China. Renewed anti-Japanese riots this September left one Chinese man partially paralyzed in Xian after he was beaten for driving a Japanese car.

China's diplomatic rhetoric also became more strident. When US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton expressed support for freedom of navigation in the South China Sea at a July 2010 meeting in Hanoi,



Chinese and Japanese surveillance ship shadow each other near the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands.

China's Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi described the remarks as "an attack on China." He subsequently dismissed a Singaporean minister with the words: "China is a big country and other countries are small countries, and that's just a fact." Those words have been cited, with some bitterness, across Asia since.

Other countries in this dispute became more incensed upon realizing that China's new generation of passports first issued this spring contain maps showing the South China Sea as a Chinese possession. In protest, Vietnam and the Philippines announced they would no longer stamp Chinese passports with visas, but instead insert a separate visa form.

Last week, in another sign of uncoordinated policymaking, the provincial government of the southern island of Hainan passed laws authorizing the Chinese Coast Guard to board foreign ships entering waters claimed by China in the South China Sea and force them to change course. The Philippines immediately protested the laws, which appeared locally written and not handed down by Beijing, as "a threat to all countries."

To be sure, as protests risked getting out of control, more moderate officials in China have stepped in to calm tempers. Others, like veteran diplomat Dai Binguo, have sought to tone down the Foreign Ministry

rhetoric. But the perception that China is overbearing has already taken hold amongst many of its neighbors who line up to petition the US to reassert its influence in the region.

Much to Beijing's displeasure, the US has responded, basing Marines in Australia, sending naval ships to visit Vietnam's Cam Ranh Bay and negotiating a renewed presence of US forces in the Philippines. President Barack Obama's recent Asia trip included two countries, Burma, renamed by its government as Myanmar, and Cambodia, both of which China had long treated as client states.

The US is not alone in wooing China's neighbors. India is, too, after Chinese vessels challenged Indian ships in the South China Sea and China sought to block an Indian oil company from signing an oil exploration deal with Vietnam. India has joined the list of countries agitating for freedom of navigation through heavily-sailed trade routes in the South China Sea. And China's old wartime enemy Japan has for the first time since World War II begun giving military aid to some Asian neighbors, including negotiating with Vietnam and Philippines to donate Coast Guard ships.

China's power will inevitably continue to rise in Asia. The question is whether Beijing can manage this without making itself the regional boogeyman. There is a structural problem. Uniquely among large powers, China has no national security council, as pointed out by Richard Solomon, former US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia - no body where military, intelligence, diplomatic and economic experts can jointly formulate the country's policy in sensitive international situations.

The level of civilian control over the People's Liberation Army is obscure, at best. In 2011, for example, during a visit to Beijing by then-US Defense Secretary Robert Gates, the Chinese military carried out the first test flight of a new stealth fighter apparently without telling then-President Hu Jintao in advance, who seemed embarrassed when Gates had questions. In the Communist Party hierarchy there are two PLA representatives on the 25-member Politburo and none on the elite seven-member Standing Committee. If China had its own security council, there would be more information exchange and policy coordination among the various civilian and military agencies and less chance of either premature military actions or incendiary nationalist rhetoric incompatible with China's longer-term goals.

The greatest danger in the South China Sea and East China Sea is not some meticulously planned campaign by China to subdue neighbors, but an inadvertent crisis caused by overzealous officials operating in a policy vacuum. That is the truly scary scenario.

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## Omar Faruq and the flag of Bangladesh

LT. COL. (RETD.) QUAZI SAJJAD ALI ZAHIR, BIR PROTIK

Omar Faruq was born on March 12, 1950, in Pirojpur. He was the son of Sayedur Rahman Sharif and Kulsum Begum.

Omar was attracted to politics from the time he was a school boy. In 1966 Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman came to Pirojpur to address a public meeting in the Pirojpur town hall maidsan. The meeting was aimed at rallying public opinion in favour of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's six-point demand. Moved by Bangabandhu's emotionally-charged speech, young Omar Faruq made a decision to participate in the six-point programme and joined the Chattrra League.

By the end of 1967, Omar Faruq had become the leader of Pirojpur sub-division Chattrra League. On March 23, 1971, he hoisted the flag of Bangladesh in the Shaheed Minar, adjacent to the town hall of Pirojpur; attended by a huge crowd who were cheering the rising flag.

In a meeting of the All Party Students Front of Pirojpur on April 24, 1971, Omar suggested a plan to resist the Pakistan army in case they advanced towards Pirojpur. On March 26, 1971, after receiving the news of massacre in Dhaka and other parts of the country, the people of Pirojpur took out four revolvers, one hundred .303 rifles and 8,000 rounds of ammunition from the government armory and began preparing for the defence of Pirojpur. Faruq along with other newly formed group of freedom fighters took up position in and around the Pirojpur area. The Pakistan army attacked Pirojpur on April 30, and was able to take control of the town by May 3. Even though the freedom fighters resisted fiercely, they were outnumbered and outgunned. Freedom fighters started withdrawing from the town area and Faruq was cut off from his group and went into hiding. On May 29, 1971, he decided to move to India for joining the resistance training there. He boarded a launch but a non-Bengalee policeman named Hanif who was working in the Pirojpur police station identified him. Faruq was taken to the army camp in Barisal where he was tortured when the army realised he was the first to raise the flag of Bangladesh in Pirojpur, and was a member of the Pirojpur resistance.

The Pakistan army then decided to make an example of Omar. Weakened and damaged by torture and the beatings, he was dragged in front of the public, where they cut a portion of his skull and inserted the flag of Bangladesh. As he lay dying, the army taunted him by saying: "You may now shout the slogan of Joy Bangla." When he died, his body was hung on a tree for several days for the people to see.

In January 1973, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman came to Pirojpur and addressed the people in the same town hall maidsan where he had held the public rally in 1966. He spoke at length about the killings of the Bengali population by the Pakistani military, and he made a special mention of Omar Faruq who was killed so brutally for raising the flag of independent Bangladesh.

The brutal killing of Omar Faruq is unfortunately only one example of the thousands of Bangladeshis who were tortured and killed by the Pakistan army. It is a horrific reminder of how the army would go to any inhumane length to intimidate and defeat the spirit of independence of 1971.

The writer is a Freedom Fighter.

# Why UN climate agreements fail

SHAMUS COOKE

HISTORY will undoubtedly deliver the harshest condemnations of the UN climate talks currently underway in Doha, Qatar. But the conference was laughable before it began; the inept "goals" of the talks stand in tragicomic opposition to what we already know about climate change that the climate has already changed in profound ways and its trajectory spells doom for civilization if drastic, coordinated steps are not taken in the immediate future.

For example, the Doha talks began with a shocking dose of reality: the World Meteorological Organization reported to the UN conference that an area of Arctic sea ice bigger than the United States melted in the past year, a rate faster than the most pessimistic scientists imagined only a couple of years ago.

The politicians at the UN climate talks thought the news equally unimpressive.

The Associated Press summarized the World Meteorological Organization's report to the UN:

"... The Arctic ice melt was one of a myriad of extreme and record-breaking weather events to hit the planet in 2012. Droughts devastated nearly two-thirds of the United States as well as western Russia and southern Europe. Floods swamped West Africa and heat waves left much of the Northern Hemisphere sweltering."

One could also mention Hurricane Sandy, or the ever-increasing ferocity of US wildfires, or the quickly rising acidification of the ocean, not to mention the alarming rise of atmospheric methane levels - a stronger greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide due to the arctic warming.

We now know that many of these catastrophic weather patterns are due to warmer climates; warm air holds more water than cold air, equaling more droughts for arid climates, and stronger storms and flooding for non-arid climates.

Armed with this knowledge, the Obama administration was once again challenged to join the Kyoto Protocol, the international treaty that aims at collective reduction of greenhouse gasses (itself already sadly inadequate to address climate realities). Like Bush before him, Obama has placed the United States as the biggest barrier to climate progress internationally.

The Associated Press continues:

"A pact [the Kyoto Protocol] that once incorporated all industrialized countries except the United States would now include only the European Union, Australia and several smaller countries which together account for less than 15 per cent of global emissions. And the United States is refusing to offer any bolder commitments to cut its emissions beyond a non-binding pledge to reduce emissions by 17 percent below 2005 levels by 2020."

Thus, the most influential country in the world and largest historic contributor to the current levels of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere will only "commit" to a "non-binding pledge" to reduce greenhouse gasses below levels that will have absolutely no effect on climate change. Instead of waging a massive campaign

to educate the US public about the truly giant investments needed to re-structure the US economy to produce large-scale renewable energy, there is no conversation at all. Not a peep.

Even the once grandiose scheme of free-market capitalism curing the climate disease via investments in green technology has all but ceased. The big profits that rich investors were to make with green technology while saving the world in the process



have collapsed. Forbes Magazine explains:

"If you need any more evidence how green tech has fallen out of favor with venture capitalists, look no further than the latest data...Overall this year, venture [capitalist] investing in clean tech is on track to drop to the same level as 2009...The Cleantech numbers show how venture capitalists have gotten clobbered in solar and have all but pulled out."

Obama thought that the green venture capitalists needed just a nudge of govern-

ment support to get the green profits flowing, so he included billions of giveaways to them in his latest stimulus plan.

But ultimately he proved in painful fashion the limits of a market-based approach to addressing climate change, with the most famous example being the solar panel maker Solyndra, which, after two years of receiving the stimulus money, filed for bankruptcy, taking \$500 million in taxpayer stimulus money with it.

Obama is using the same mentality at the United Nation's climate talks. He thinks not in terms of how different nations can unite in a planned fashion to fight the already-changed climate, but thinks instead of the United States as a giant corporation fighting competitors abroad. This quip from the New York Times perfectly explains the outlook of U.S. politicians towards international climate treaties:

"...the American political system is not ready to agree to a [climate] treaty that would force the United States, over time, to accept profound changes in its energy [coal, oil, shale gas], transport [trucking, airline, and shipping industries] and manufacturing [corporate] sectors." It's become undeniably clear that US government inaction on climate change is directly linked to the "special interests" of corporations that dominate the government. Its due time that those concerned about our climate draw a similar conclusion. Countless environmentalists have tried

to solve the climate issue while keeping capitalism in place, since this is the only "practical" solution. But this approach has failed as the climate has dramatically worsened. It is becoming increasingly obvious to a growing number of people that our economic system itself cannot be reformed to save our environment, regardless of the incentives or other schemes to make it so.

In fact, capitalism internationally has declared war against the public sector via massive privatization schemes that destroy what little regulation existed, while environmental agencies are de-funded and run by anti-environment bureaucrats. Capitalism seems to be screaming out its inability to change, except for the worse.

This is also, why the Doha climate talks have "less ambitious" goals than the Copenhagen conference before it; we are going in the wrong direction at the same speed that the climate is worsening. There is a direct connection between the reverse direction of the climate talks and the scramble for oil and other raw materials that is leading to war at an alarming rate. Capitalism is in crisis and needs all available resources funneled into the private sector to re-boost profits, to the detriment of the environment.

Addressing climate change will take a monumental largely unprofitable effort. The climate talks are indeed going backwards as international competition for markets and raw materials meets in a crescendo, leading to an increasing amount of regional wars.

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