

# The East China Sea Gas Fields, at the Forefront of China's Military Strategy

By SUZUKI Keisuke

With respect to the Chinese gas drilling development in the East China Sea, I have repeatedly raised the point in many occasions at the Lower House Foreign Affairs Committee, etc., and have given repeated warnings about this matter since 2005, when I got the seat. Now this issue is at the fore again, following the government's publication of the aerial photographs. China's actions in the East China Sea gas field are an extremely serious problem that should be considered from the both aspects of international justice, with regards to the territory of Japan and her territorial waters, and national security with regards to China's marine strategy.

The point regarding the international legal issue refers to the fact that Japan still retains the title over a two hundred mile zone referred to as the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Neither Japan nor China has defined their borders in the East China Sea and this is still a pending issue. Given that the Communist Party of China (CCP) does not recognize the touchstone, in this case the median line between Japan and China, the line does not have any legal validity in the view of the international courts, or Japan. In this sense, we must not forget, under any circumstances, the golden rule of claiming our own rights and taking necessary actions to protect them in the whole area of the sea which Japan claims as her EEZ.

Therefore, whether one refers to the fields as Shirakaba or Kashi (the name of the gas fields in the Japanese joint development plans), or Tengaiten (name of the gas fields in Chinese), one should acknowledge the fact that the national sovereignty of Japan has been violated, regardless of the position of the median line. What needs to be clarified is that we view this behavior as an infringement of our rights by the CCP within Japan's "territory". Although China also makes a one-sided claim and vice versa. If China informs us at some time or another that they de facto accept the median line, we can see the point in discussing the median line as a measuring stick. However, currently this discussion is highly improbable.

When we view this from the perspective of national security, one should consider the essential action in the Chinese strategy, which focuses on reducing U.S. military presence in the Western Pacific Ocean, as being to secure access points to the Pacific Ocean, such as the Miyako Strait. China needs to satisfy various conditions such as reducing the patrol operations of Japan and United States, which is crucial in achieving her goal. We need to have a clear awareness of the fact that China's act to develop the gas fields is the means of effective control as well

as establishing naval and air supremacy over the East China Sea. At any rate, it is certain that Japan is indeed in an unpredictable situation. It is critically important not only to coordinate between Japan and United States but also to express concern in the international community about Chinese behavior in the South China Sea and the East China Sea. I would like to take advantage of various opportunities and to continue working on this issue.

**(This is an English translation of the article written by Mr. SUZUKI Keisuke, Member of the House of Representatives, which originally appeared on the e-forum “Hyakka-Somei” of CEAC on July 28, 2015.)**