

A new Chinese aggression¹

China has done it again. One would have thought that after the 4 day-Plenum of the 18th CPC Central Committee (held from November 9 to 12) that the new leadership would have began focusing their energies on reforms; but no, they have taken a most controversial and dangerous course, destabilizing the region and upsetting the neighbours.

In India, we still remember the events of April, when the People's Liberation Army planted their tents in Depsang Plain of Ladakh.

On November 23, the Chinese Ministry of National Defense issued a statement announcing the establishment of the East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone, "in accordance with the Law of the People's Republic of China on National Defense (1997), the Law of the People's Republic of China on Civil Aviation (1995) and the Basic Rules on Flight of the People's Republic of China (2001)." Well, not accordance with friendly relations with its neighbours!

The statement then gives the coordinates of "outer limit of China's territorial sea", which engulfs the South China Sea and the islands in dispute with Japan.

A day later, the Chinese Air Force (PLAAF) admitted that I had conducted a air patrol over the zone: "Reconnaissance and early-warning aircraft and warplanes were deployed."

Beijing defined thus an Air Defense Identification Zone: "it is a zone that can extend in some cases up to 300 miles beyond the territorial sea. It's established by some countries off their coasts for security reasons. When

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entering the zone, all aircraft are required to identify themselves, report flight plans, and inform ground control of their exact position.”

A few days earlier, the Third Plenum had delivered 2 new Leading Groups: one on reforms (it was expected) and more surprisingly, a National Security Committee (NSC).

It was then explained: “The general objective of the approved reforms is to improve and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics ...development is still the key to solving all problems in China.”

A statement concluded with “the need to deepen reforms in order to build a moderately prosperous society, and a strong and democratic country, as well as realize the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation.”

A host of measures were initiated ‘to ensure that the authority of the constitution and laws is upheld’.

Beijing admitted that the most important factor which needed to be monitored is what the Party calls ‘stability’. According to Xi Jinping, the new economic policies can only be implemented if China is stable: “State security and social stability are preconditions for reform and development”, said the President, adding that only when the nation is safe and society is stable, could reform and development constantly advance.

Will the new aggressive foreign policy make China stable? Certainly not!

‘Stability’ was the justification for the creation of the NSC which will deal with internal as well external issues: “China is facing two pressures: internationally, the country needs to safeguard its sovereignty, security and development interests; domestically, political security and social stability should be ensured”, explained Xi, adding: “The variety of predictable and

unpredictable risks has been increasing remarkably, and the system has not yet met the needs of safeguarding state security.”

Reuters believed, “it will enable the government to speak with a single voice when it comes to dealing with crises at home and abroad.”

Does the latest move, to create Air Defense Identification Zone have been taken with a ‘single voice’? We have to wait several decades to know.

But in the wake of the Plenum, military schools have been asked to review their curriculums ‘to boost real combat abilities’. According to an official PLA statement, “the reform will also unify teaching materials, innovate in teaching methods for combat command and hone a performance-based reward and penalty mechanism for students.”

It was also said that the PLA will “better co-ordinate the work of its different military and geographical branches”.

The Plenum also decided to optimize the PLA’s size and structure and also adjust and improve the proportion between various troops, and reduce non-combat institutions and personnel.

In the process, there is an increase of aggressiveness; recently, the Chinese military's National Defense University, the General Political Security and General Staff Departments, the Chinese Academy of Social Science and the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations jointly released a documentary titled ‘Silent Contest’; though widely circulated from June to October, it was later blocked by the authorities.

The movie, which is pure anti-American propaganda, asserts that the United States has used 5 methods to subvert China: 1) Political Infiltration, 2) Cultural infiltration, 3) Ideological infiltration, 4) Organizational infiltration, and 5) Political interference and social penetration.

Washington's 'conspiracy' is said to be at the root of all evils in the Middle Kingdom: social conflicts, officials' corruption, human rights protests, spread of Christianity and advocacy of a 'constitutional government'.

Is the latest move an indirect attack on the US?

Fumio Kishida, Japan's foreign minister immediately condemned the new China's air defense zone over disputed islands. He said that the Chinese declaration is a dangerous escalation that could lead to a miscalculation or accident; this, in turn, could start an armed confrontation and the US would automatically be dragged into the conflict.

The US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel warned that the American government viewed the Chinese move "as a destabilizing attempt to alter the status quo in the region." He also reaffirmed that the United States would stand by its security treaty obligations with Japan.

Where does all this lead us?

White House spokesman Josh Earnest told reporters that the fact that China wants airlines to inform Beijing when they are entering airspace over disputed islands in the East China Sea is 'unnecessarily inflammatory,' adding that there should be common ground "to reach a resolution that doesn't involve inflammatory, escalating rhetoric or policy pronouncements by any side, and that's how we hope this situation will be resolved."

It is however not in China's habit to back out of its position.

While the new NSC is supposedly designed to increase the coordination and the integration between the police, military, intelligence and diplomatic services; it is doubtful if the diplomatic angle has not been taken into consideration in this case.

The Chinese propaganda still affirms: "China is a stabilizer for world peace and security, and the new commission is like a performance guarantee for the stabilizer and will in turn bring benefits to the whole world. If China can be safer, the whole world will be safer as well."

The facts speak differently.