



China retaliates lashing provocative challenges from US and Japan

June 1, 2014 Philip Wen *China correspondent for Fairfax Media*

Provocative challenge: Deputy chief of staff of the Chinese Army Lieutenant-General Wang Guanzhong speaks at the Shangri-La Dialogue, in Singapore. *Photo: Reuters*

A senior Chinese general has hit back at a “provocative challenge” from the United States and Japan, denouncing criticism of Beijing’s handling of a spate of escalating territorial disputes in the region. The countries squared off in a war of words that at times overshadowed an Asian security forum over the weekend and also highlighted the potential for the Abbott government’s close defence ties with Washington and Tokyo to anger its largest trading partner, China.

Lieutenant General Wang Guanzhong, the People’s Liberation Army’s deputy chief of general staff, said on Sunday that his delegation at the annual Shangri-La Dialogue security summit in Singapore was surprised by what appeared to be a coordinated and staged “provocative challenge against China”. “The Chinese delegation ... have this feeling that the speeches of Mr Abe and Mr Hagel are a provocative action against China,” General Wang said.

Earlier, he had told reporters that Mr Hagel’s speech was full of “hegemonism, threat and intimidation”. Speaking at the security forum, Australia’s defence minister David Johnston reiterated shared concerns over “recent developments which have served to raise tensions in the region”. Echoing similar comments made by foreign minister Julie Bishop on Friday, Mr Johnston said the Abbott government welcomed the United States taking on a greater role in Asia, a statement unlikely to sit well with a Chinese leadership that views the US strategic ‘pivot’ back into the region as an antagonistic move designed to contain its rise.

“It bears repeating ... that the continued presence of the US has underpinned the region’s stability for the past 70 years,” Mr Johnston told the summit on Saturday. “That’s why Australia welcomes the US rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region. We see it as an opportunity to foster further close cooperation in the region.” Both Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and US Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel used unusually strong language to describe what they saw as China’s “destabilising” and “unilateral” push to assert territorial claims in the East and South China Seas – a source of significant tension between China and its neighbours including Japan, Vietnam and the Philippines.

Beijing has also accused Mr Abe’s nationalist administration of fear-mongering to “stealthily advance his dream for Japan to again be a militarist power” – while warning this would only result in a regional “arms race” that would set back economic development and cooperation in the region. In their speeches, both Mr Abe and Mr Hagel made direct references to its close military cooperation with Australia – an unprecedented elevation of Japan-Australia security ties during Tony Abbott’s visit to Japan in April, and the rotation of US marines through Darwin respectively.

Diverting from prepared remarks, General Wang said that the speeches were "unacceptable", accusing Mr Abe, who delivered the keynote address on Friday, and Mr Hagel, who spoke on Saturday, of coordinating and encouraging each other to attack China in their remarks. Long-standing tensions in the South China Sea have been stoked to fresh highs in recent weeks as Chinese and Vietnamese vessels faced off over a Chinese state-owned oil rig drilling in disputed waters. Both Beijing and Hanoi have traded accusations over responsibility over the sinking of a Vietnamese fishing vessel near the rig.

There have also been reports of near misses between Chinese and Japanese aircraft in the airspace near disputed islands, as well. Ms Bishop, who clashed with her Chinese counterpart Wang Yi late last year after criticising China's declaration of an air defence zone over the East China Sea, said China could choose one of two possible courses.

The first would see China integrate peacefully into the global community in line with President Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream", while the alternate scenario would see a more nationalistic China wracked with domestic and external conflicts fuelled by historic territorial disputes and regional suspicion over its intentions.

"I certainly doubt that we will see a complete realisation of either scenario," Ms Bishop said on Friday. "As its power grows, China will become integrated into the international system. It doesn't mean addressing the challenges and risks will be easy."

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/china-lashes-provocative-challenge-from-us-japan-20140601-zrueh.html>

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China accuses US and Japan of provocative actions

Demetri Sevastopulo in Singapore June 1, 2014 EPA

A top Chinese general on Sunday accused the US and Japan of teaming up to stage "provocative actions" against China, as [escalating maritime tensions](#) spilled into an Asian regional defence forum. Speaking at the Shangri-La Dialogue, Wang Guanzhong, deputy chief of the Chinese general staff, lambasted Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Chuck Hagel, US defence secretary, for telling the forum of Asian defence ministers that China was using intimidation to assert its territorial claims.

"The speeches by Mr Abe and Mr Hagel gave me the impression that they co-ordinated with each other, they supported each other, they encouraged each other and they took the advantage of speaking first ... and staged provocative actions and challenges against China," said Gen Wang. Mr Hagel on Saturday said China was undermining its claims that the South China Sea was a "sea of peace, friendship and co-operation" by using

coercive tactics, adding that the US would “not look the other way when fundamental principles of the international order are being challenged”. On Friday, Mr Abe said [Japan would give more support](#) to southeast Asian nations that are facing Chinese pressure.

In the face of mounting efforts by the US and Japan to shore up or build new security relationships in Asia, Gen Wang said China opposed both the practice of building military alliances and “attempts by any country to dominate regional affairs”. In a jab at Japan’s wartime history, Gen Wang said China would “never allow fascism ... to stake a comeback”. The Shangri-La Dialogue has become one of the key defence events in Asia, particularly as China becomes more willing to voice its views at the forum. Gen Wang said he had not intended to deliver a critical speech, but felt compelled to respond to Mr Hagel whose speech was “full of hegemony”.

This year’s event became more heated because of the [escalating disputes](#) in the South China Sea and East China Sea. China is embroiled in maritime disputes around the region, including with Manila and Tokyo. Scores of Chinese and Vietnamese ships are also involved in a standoff near the disputed Paracel Islands after China started drilling for oil there in early May. China’s neighbours are concerned about the “nine-dash line”, a demarcation on Chinese maps that encloses much of the South China Sea, suggesting that Beijing lays claim to most of the resource-rich waters.

Asked to clarify the “nine-dash line”, Gen Wang said while China respected UNCLOS, the law did not apply retroactively – a view that is not commonly accepted. He stressed that China discovered many of the islands in the Paracels and Spratly Islands, another disputed group closer to the Philippines, more than 2,000 years ago during the Han Dynasty. Gen Wang said China did not take provocative actions, but was being forced to respond to such actions from other countries. But when asked Vietnam had done to trigger the decision to move the oil rig to disputed waters, sparking the worst crisis in China-Vietnam relations in years, the general did not respond.

While Shangri-La is designed to tackle a range of Asia-Pacific security issues, the focus has in recent years shifted squarely to China, with most of the participants this year asking China to explain its policies and actions. Some experts questioned whether a new Cold War was emerging in Asia. Anatoly Antonov, Russia’s deputy defence secretary, took exception to comments by Mr Hagel that the US was the only power that could lead in the Asia-Pacific region. “Why does the US have to lead? To lead what?”

<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/6f902368-e95a-11e3-bbc1-00144feabdc0.html#axzz33ND1bKjC>

China slams US, Japan for provocative remarks

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Lieutenant General Wang Guanzhong, deputy chief of the general staff of the People's Liberation Army, has slammed US and Japan for what he called 'provocative' remarks.

SINGAPORE: China denounced Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and US defence secretary Chuck Hagel on Sunday for "provocative" remarks accusing Beijing of destabilizing actions in contested Asian waters.

Lieutenant General Wang Guanzhong, deputy chief of the general staff of the People's Liberation Army, told an Asian security forum in Singapore that strong comments made by Abe and Hagel at the conference were "unacceptable".

Abe had opened the Shangri-La Dialogue on Friday by urging countries to respect the rule of law — an apparent reference to what rivals consider aggressive Chinese behaviour over disputed areas in the South China Sea and East China Sea. Hagel on Saturday warned China against "destabilizing actions" in the South China Sea and listed a number of alleged infractions, including against the Philippines and Vietnam, the two most vocal critics of Beijing's claims.

"The Chinese delegation ... have this feeling that the speeches of Abe and Hagel are a provocative action against China," Wang, dressed in full military uniform, said in an address to the forum. Abe had left on Saturday and Hagel departed early on Sunday before Wang spoke. The Pentagon said Hagel and Wang held a brief meeting on Saturday in which they "exchanged views about issues important to both the US and China, as well as to the region".

About midway into his prepared speech in which he said China "will never seek hegemony and foreign expansion", Wang diverted from the script. He accused Abe and Hagel of "coordinating" with each other to attack China. "This is simply unimaginable," said Wang, the highest ranking military official in the Chinese delegation, adding that the US and Japanese speeches were "unacceptable and not in the spirit of this Shangri-La Dialogue". "The speeches made by Abe and Hagel gave me the impression that they coordinated

with each other, they supported each other, they encouraged each other and they took the advantage of speaking first ... and staged provocative actions and challenges against China," he said. Hagel issued a blunt message to Beijing on Saturday, saying "China has undertaken destabilizing, unilateral actions asserting its claims in the South China Sea." He accused China of restricting the Philippines' access to Scarborough Shoal, putting pressure on Manila's long-standing presence in Second Thomas Shoal, beginning land reclamation at various locations and moving an oil rig into disputed waters with Vietnam. Hagel said that while Washington does not take sides on rival claims, "we firmly oppose any nation's use of intimidation, coercion, or the threat of force to assert these claims".

"The United States will not look the other way when fundamental principles of the international order are being challenged," he warned. Abe in turn pledged that his country would play a larger role in promoting peace in Asia as his administration moves to reshape

the Japanese military's purely defensive stance. "Japan intends to play an even greater and more proactive role than it has until now in making peace in Asia and the world something more certain," Abe said. Beijing and Tokyo contest islands in the East China Sea.

Wang, who stressed Beijing's historic rights to the seas, said he preferred Hagel's frankness by directly naming China, compared to Abe who did not mention any country but obviously targeted Beijing. "If I am to compare the attitude of the two leaders, I would prefer the attitude of Mr Hagel. It is better to be more direct," he said. As the conference drew to a close, French defence minister Jean-Yves Le Drian joined a chorus of senior defence officials urging rival claimants to show restraint to prevent larger conflicts.

Le Drian said a proposed agreement between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on a code of conduct to handle disputes in the South China Sea was "the only way to prevent incidents in that coveted area". Singapore defence minister Ng Eng Hen urged Asian states not to "backslide into a fractious environment, riven by confrontational nationalism and lack of mutual trust".

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/china/China-slams-US-Japan-for-provocative-remarks/articleshow/35884699.cms>