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Gints Amoliņš, Foreign news reporter, LTV

**Researcher in an interview with LTV:**

**China's military advance in the seas poses great security risks**

Japan and Taiwan protested against China's actions on Wednesday - for the first time a Beijing aircraft carrier was observed in Japanese territorial waters, seen near islands close to Taiwan. There are two main security threats in the region. One is the development of North Korea's missiles and nuclear weapons, and the other is China's military advance in the oceans, Japanese expert, researcher of Chinese politics Akio Takahara, who had arrived in Riga, said in an interview on LTV's "World Panorama" program.

Latvian Television journalist Gints Amoliņš intervied the researcher.

**Gints Amoliņš: What are the biggest security threats in your region right now?**

**Akio Takahara:** There are two main security threats in our region. One of them is North Korea's missile and nuclear weapons development. And the other is China's military advance in the oceans.

**In your speech, you also mentioned that in terms of seas and oceans, it is important for China to become both a land and sea power. Can you explain this in more detail?**

Chinese President Xi Jinping gave a closed speech in May 2017, making it very clear that he wants China to be a real world power - a power both on land and at sea. Therefore, he argues, China needs to go out into the oceans, but they are partially restricted by the so-called first chain of islands.

We are used to seeing a map showing China from north to south. But if we turn the perspective from the western side of China, you can clearly see that the first chain of islands partially restricts China's advance in the seas.

It connects the Japanese archipelago, Taiwan, the Philippines and so on. That's his goal. And it gives new meaning to the addition of Taiwan as a bridgehead for China's entry into the Pacific.

**What do you expect from China in the near or far future?**

The Chinese will try to increase their military power. The traditional thinking of Sunzi's treatise "The Art of War" is to win without fighting, that is the best way. So they will simply put pressure on the smaller countries surrounding China to make them concede. But we have our interests, we have our national feelings, and politicians must be responsible. In this sense, the tension between us and China will continue.

**There has been a lot of talk about China and Russia and their support, even though China says it does not support either side in this Russian war in Ukraine. How would you comment on that? Also regarding the supply of dual-use goods, it has recently been reported that Chinese motors have been used in Russian drones.**

Despite the fact that China's leaders say they are taking a neutral position, this is not really true. Xi Jinping has met with [Vladimir] Putin many times since the beginning of the war. But he has never visited Ukraine, never once met President [Volodymyr] Zelensky. This openly shows that he is taking sides and supporting the Russian war effort by supplying these technologies and products.

These are rumours, I cannot confirm their truth. But when German Chancellor [Olaf] Scholz visited Beijing in April and told Xi Jinping that he had to stop sending these dual-use goods to Russia - Xi Jinping responded by saying: “When we import ice cream into Russia and a Russian soldier eats it, does that mean it's a dual use product?” Namely, he responded with ridicule.

And for Europeans, of course, this is not acceptable. Also to [European Commission President Ursula] von der Leyen and [French President Emmanuel] Macron when they met Xi Jinping in France in May. On that occasion, Xi Jinping used the metaphor of rice instead of ice cream, essentially saying the same thing.

**Why does China want to support Russia?**

China's biggest foreign policy goal is to win the strategic competition with the United States. Therefore, despite the contradictions between the two of them, they need each other. Therefore, Xi Jinping does not want Putin to fail.

**Your country - Japan - is also trying to navigate these international waters in recent years. Russia's war in Ukraine and the situation in your region, Southeast Asia - how do they affect each other?**

The Japanese are really upset about Putin's invasion [of Ukraine]. This is a clear violation of the UN Charter. The Japanese value the idea that we should never impose our will on other nations by force. This is what we have learned from our mistakes during World War II.

Therefore, we are very disappointed and ready to support the Ukrainians. We have secured more than a billion euros worth of aid in non-lethal support to Ukraine. And we worry that something like this could happen in our part of the world.

**Has Russia's war in Ukraine made it more likely?**

There are different theories about it. I think it would depend on how the war situation will develop and what lessons Xi Jinping will learn from Putin's experience in Ukraine.

**Could the security situation in Southeast Asia somehow affect the security situation here?**

Yes, absolutely. Because of two things. First of all, if maritime traffic lines are disrupted in our part of the world due to any hostilities, then the whole world, including Latvia and Europe, will suffer greatly. That would be devastating to the world economy. So we have to prevent it. That`s the first thing. And if China succeeds in imposing its will on other nations, it will affect the world in all kinds of ways, and it will affect you in many ways.

**You mentioned North Korea as one of the two biggest threats to your region's security. Photos of North Korean leader Kim visiting a uranium enrichment plant were recently published. There have been missile tests. He seems to have become more and more confident in recent months?**

He is very enigmatic. We don't really know what he wants, what results he is trying to achieve with their nuclear demonstrations. And it's a big headache. No one knows exactly how we should handle him. How should we influence his behavior? Interestingly, in this context, we are pinning our hopes on China. Because without China's support, North Korea cannot survive. But it is just like the relationship between a mother and a boy who does not listen to his mother. Without the mother, the boy would die, but the mother cannot make the boy listen to her. However, China has the leverage to influence Kim Jong-un's behavior. But at the same time, we have to be on good terms with Beijing to benefit from that. And it's not easy right now.

**I assume North Korea will also be one of the topics of discussion later this week when US President Biden hosts the talks among leaders of Japan, Australia and India in Delaware, his home town. What do you expect from this so-called "Quad" security dialogue meeting?**

"Quad" is a platform for discussing not only for security issues, but also development and cooperation issues. So I'm sure there will be a mix of different elements in the conversation, but certainly the current security environment around the world - security in both Europe and Asia would be one of the most important topics that will be discussed in Delaware.

**Is the timing of this meeting of particular importance?**

Yes, especially since this will be President Biden's last Quad meeting, and the same is true for our Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. What will be their farewell words to the other heads of state? It will be the center of attention.

**India will also be there, and there have been talks that India might try to mediate between Russia and Ukraine in peace talks.**

I think Indian Prime Minister [Narendra] Modi will try very hard. And we look forward to what Modi has to say, for example, about what he has experienced within BRICS. You know, there are countries that want to join BRICS. The organization already expanded earlier this year, but there are more countries that want to join. What does that mean? How does BRICS work? All this we would like to hear from Mr. Modi.