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China' s expanding threat across Asia

As a Japanese national, I have spent the past four years studying and living in Taiwan, where I have witnessed how Taiwanese society confronts democracy and national security in ways that differ from Japan.

Taiwan is a trustworthy neighbor and a good friend to Japan. I have seen firsthand how it stands on the front line of a growing geopolitical storm.

In Taiwan, the threat posed by China is not abstract — it is a lived reality. News of Chinese military aircraft entering Taiwan' s air defense identification zone is frequent, and nationwide air raid drills and civil defense education are conducted regularly.

In Japan, such drills and discussions are rarely seen in daily life. Taiwanese society responds in a much more practical and realistic way. Taiwanese live with a quiet, but constant sense of vigilance. Especially among young people, there is no indifference — they seek information, think critically and prepare themselves mentally, while wishing for peace.

Despite both being democracies under pressure from China, the public awareness in Taiwan and Japan is vastly different.

Although China' s threat is discussed in Japanese politics and academia, it has not deeply permeated public consciousness. In everyday life, there is little sense of urgency or crisis.

Yet, looking closely — economic dependence, cyberattacks and provocative actions around the Diaoyutais (釣魚台列嶼), known in Japan as the Senkaku Islands — it is clear that pressure is steadily increasing.

Japan is like a house with its windows open wide while a storm approaches. Everything might appear calm now, but we are not prepared.

Taiwan is not alone. South Korea, the Philippines and parts of Southeast Asia are also under growing pressure from China. Whether military, economic or political, the tactics might vary, but the goal seems consistent: expanding influence and control.

That is not a call to provoke conflict — it is a call to wake up. Young people in Asia must recognize and share this reality. If we ignore what is happening in Taiwan, similar problems could one day reach our own countries.

That is why nations under pressure from China must stand together, raise their voices and support one another. It will not be easy — political systems, public sentiment and economic ties present many obstacles. Still, the willingness to cooperate rather than isolate is the first step toward a more secure future.

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