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Japan's 'Virtue' and the Abduction Issue

by YAMAUCHI Masayuki

An American scholar cites two incidents that took place in Asia as milestones of the Twentieth century which are of world-historical importance. One is Japanese-Russo War of 1904, in which Japan for the first time in history repelled European rule over Asia, and the other the division of the Korean Peninsula after cease-fire of the Korean War in 1953. The Twenty-first century will also witness the world being shaken up by high profile of Asia, where China and India are on the sharp rise and considered a menace. Meanwhile, the global universalism which centers on the Western capitalism including that of the U.S. wreaked wars and revolutions, thereby creating tensions and chasms among peoples over the semantics of public good on a level of civilization.

New challenges by the Islamic world and frontal countercharges by the U.S. for instance pose serious issues of terrorism as well as disparity upon humanity in the Twenty-first century. We should bear afresh in mind that abduction conducted by North Korea is nothing but diabolical terrorism. Regardless of the fact that North Korea itself is the tragic artifact of the division of Korean Peninsula, or whether the U.S. removes North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, Japan's basic stance against North Korea would not budge an inch.

No society is more afflicted with the tension between individual person's interest and public good than today's Japan. That is why we must not neglect the weightiness of the Abduction Issues which have a vital interest with the fundamentals of humanism. We, Japanese are firm in our conviction that it is highly important for us to think out in a comprehensive approach how the civilization and order of the Twenty-first century should be. We must therefore retrieve the abduction victims back home. As Machiavelli, an Italian political philosopher, once said, it is 'virtue' that is indispensable to establish and maintain a stable political order. In an era when virtue is decaying and self-interested people abound, it is Japan's mission to disseminate in and outside the country the way to revitalize the notion of public good, while trying to reconcile both public and private life in harmony. We could say that the solution of the abduction issue is the touchstone for our goal.

(This is the English translation of an article written by Mr. YAMAUCHI Masayuki, Professor of The University of Tokyo, which originally appeared on the BBS "Giron-Hyakushutsu" of GFJ on July 5, 2008.)