

Is Osama Bin Laden a Criminal or a Hero?

By ITO Masanori

Without doubt, Osama Bin Laden is a criminal since he repeatedly executed illegal terrorism, violent murders, illegitimate destructive activities, etc. However, we must not forget at the same time why he committed such criminal conducts as well. Since the Gulf War, the U.S. military presence in the Middle East had become all the more evident, the motivation of which was the hidden aim of securing energy resources, namely petroleum. While "overthrow of the dictator Saddam Hussein" and "development and deployment of mass-destruction weapons" were adopted as excuses to attack Iraq, virtually no measures have been taken against North Korea, who lacks in attractive energy resources, in spite of her actual involvement in nuclear development.

Though employing the slogans of "democratization" and "freedom" on one hand, the U.S. in fact has coerced "the justice convenient to the U.S." on the other. Acknowledging such dictators as Mubarak and Qaddafi as well as such a dictatorship as Saudi Arabia if they are pro-U.S., the U.S. "struck down" those who were anti-U.S., thus repeatedly employing a double standard. It is not beyond our understanding that resentment against such an attitude of the U.S. had spread among Arab people. Therefore, it is also undeniable that a certain number of Arab people sympathize with him or worship him as a hero. We are reminded of the response and feeling of some Arab people to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2011, shouting, "we finally counterattacked the superpower, the United States!"

Nevertheless, we cannot tolerate the conducts by Bin Laden and al-Qaeda, who have repeatedly carried out indiscriminate terrors all over the world. What they did was enforcement of the pre-modern and anachronistic Islam fundamentalism they worshipped to secular Muslims and unrelated public who wished to adapt themselves to the Western world and its modernization. It was as brutal as, or more brutal than, the "aggression" and "dominance" by the U.S. imperialism they hated. Their terrorist attacks, which were conducted without advance notification or claim for responsibility, were more inhumane and shameful than the attacks by the U.S. military forces.

If Bin Laden had had frustration against the superpower status of the U.S., he should have fought squarely in the public with a legal and peaceful method, which was

understood and accepted by the public. Young people in Tunisia and Egypt, taking advantage of Twitter's retweet and spread as well as Facebook, succeeded in mobilizing people for demonstrations and meetings and reorienting the mind of the military. And they finally defeated the pro-U.S. dictatorial regimes. Now that Bin Laden is dead, it is of no use for us to demand his reform. But if the U.S. had captured him alive and offered him a fair trial in a third country neither pro-U.S. nor Islam, we might have been able to see Bin Laden speak the unrevealed truth for himself. Even though Bin Laden could not have been captured alive, the truth still missing due to his death should not have been blurred. It would have enabled us to identify him correctly in the world history, not as a "hero" but as a "criminal."

(This is an English translation of the article written by Mr. ITO Masanori, Company Worker and Individual Member of the Japan Forum on International Relations, which originally appeared on the BBS "Giron-Hyakushutsu" of GFJ on May 9, 2011).