

Does the US Assume Japan and China Agree to Reshelf the Senkaku Issue?

By TSUMORI Shigeru

I attended the Japan-US Dialogue hosted by the Japan Forum on International Relations the other day, which was entitled "Alliance in a New Defense Guideline Era". In the conference papers distributed to the attendants, I took notice of a phrase written by former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Rust Deming, who was one of the panelists of this event. It states, "Japan and China tacitly agree to 're-shelf' the Senkaku issue", but if this is an official view of the Department of State, that is a serious problem. So far as this issue is concerned, I may not have to mention it too much as that is well known to the Japanese public through frequent debates, but I would like to remind the American side that the official view of the Japanese government is "Re-shelving is neither declared nor implicit agreement". I believe this argument is right.

Regarding the meeting between Kakuei Tanaka and Zhou Enlai to restore Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations in 1972, and also Japanese responses to Deng Xiaoping's statement in 1978, there is no unanimous agreement among experts how to interpret the implication of both incidents. Though one former senior Japanese diplomat assumes that there was an "implicit agreement" between Japan and China, this is a minority view, and it does not represent the official view of our government in any case. The Japanese government's position is that so far as the territorial rights of the Senkaku Islands is concerned, they belong to Japan without doubt, both in terms of international law and history, and this position has not changed for years. Ever since Japanese territorial rights were confirmed in 1894, the Chinese side had not protested against this decision, and therefore, the Japanese government's position is firmly legitimate.

If the US government dares to accept China's "re-shelving theory", that is not fair and neutral at least, and we should never dismiss it. The United States says that Article 5 of the US-Japanese Security Treaty will be applied to the Senkaku Islands, but they stay impartial to territorial rights. That is utterly unacceptable for us, and their argument is incoherent. At the conference, the American side stressed that they take the same stance to Japan's territorial issues except the Northern Territories, (that is Takeshima), but this is

hardly understandable.

Regardless of the position about the Senkaku territorial issue, we must correct wrong understanding about the re-shelfing on the American side immediately, based on the fact.

(This is the English translation of an article written by TSUMORI Shigeru, Professor Emeritus, Toyo Eiwa University, which originally appeared on the e-Forum "Giron-Hyakushutsu" of GFJ on March 15, 2015.)