

# Prime Minister ABE Should Retract His Pledge to Mark "A Departure from the Post-war Regime"

By TANIMOTO Taku

On September 19, the so-called security-related bills have been passed at the Japanese Diet. This is truly a significant moment for Japan in that it has taken a step forward in bringing its security and foreign policy into harmony with the trend of the international community. I would like to pay my deepest respects to Prime Minister ABE for his leadership and political skills in accomplishing such an invincible task. On the other hand, however, I can hardly approve his long-chanted slogan of marking a departure from the "post-war regime."

Here are some reasons. First of all, as for the meaning of the "post-war regime," it primarily signifies the Yalta-Potsdam System from the viewpoint of the international community, especially of the advanced democracies the West. It is symbolized by the establishment of the United Nations whose ideals propounded in its charter are nothing less than those of the "post-war regime." Under this regime, the global security system is maintained in sets with the collective security centering on the UN Security Council and the right to self-defense, be it individual or collective, of each sovereign state. Recent passage of the security-related bills enabling, though only partially, exercise of the right to collective self-defense, is a move in perfect harmony with the present global security system as the "post-war regime." Besides, as its foreign policy, the Abe administration places emphasis on cooperation with other advanced countries who share with Japan such fundamental values as freedom or democracy. This also is a move in tune with the "post-war regime." In essence, Prime Minister ABE places at the core of its foreign policy close coordination with the "post-war regime" as understood by the international community.

Then, what does Prime Minister ABE personally mean by the post-war regime? In his policy speech to the 168th Session of the Japanese Diet in September 2007, for example, Prime Minister ABE stated "not only do we need to advance structural reforms in economic,

administrative, and fiscal areas, but also it is absolutely crucial to mark a departure from the post-war regimes, that is to say, to advance the reform of conducting bold reviews going all the way back to the origins of various systems which have been in place for so long after the war, including the rebuilding of education and the restructuring of the national security system." That is to say, he refers to a series of institutional systems of post-war Japan in economic, administrative, fiscal, educational and national security areas as the "post-war regime." However, there seem to be at least two problems in the way Prime Minister ABE grasps the "post-war regime." The first problem is that it is quite doubtful whether those institutional systems that Prime Minister ABE questions in economic, administrative, fiscal, educational and national security areas could be bracketed altogether as attributes associated with the post-war era. For instance, the current economic, administrative and fiscal systems in Japan are not necessarily proper to the post-war era, but are closely associated with Japanese organizational characteristics or decision-making process that could be traced back to the pre-war era. Besides, as for the educational system, while it has undergone reform to a certain extent, the way Japan Teachers' Union inculcates tenets of the post-war constitution upon students as if it were a post-war version of the Imperial Rescript on Education, refusing any kind of criticism against it, is quite reminiscent of the traditions from the pre-war era. On the other hand, as for the national security system, it certainly has been transformed into a completely new one after the war. It came as no surprise as it has been established in perfect parallel with the post-war global security system. The second problem is whether the post-war Japan should be denied in its entirety. As the word "regime" refers to a structure of a country or a society in its entirety, departure from it connotes a complete denial of it. While it is true that not a few institutions have now been deteriorated and fatigued by age, those institutions are the very reasons that enabled Japan's post-war reconstruction and hyper development, bringing in peace and prosperity that we enjoy today. I wonder if their complete denial leads also to denial of peace and prosperity that we enjoy today.

As thus far described, there is a semantic gap over the understanding of the "post-war regime" between the international community and Prime Minister ABE, as well as his problematic definition of the "post-war regime." In conclusion, Prime Minister ABE's slogan of marking a departure from the "post-war regime" could cause misunderstanding and confusion in the international community. There is virtually no chance that the international community should understand and accept Prime Minister ABE's slogan of marking a departure from the "post-war regime." They would sense an inconsistency in Prime Minister ABE, who on the one hand upholds principle of international cooperation and on the other pledges a departure from the "post-war regime." They would wonder

what ABE is up to with apprehension and dubious eyes. Therefore, I strongly recommend that Prime Minister ABE refrains from mentioning a departure from the “post-war regime” in the international arena, let alone at home.

**(This is the English translation of an article written by TANIMOTO Taku, Corporate Staff, which originally appeared on the e - Forum “Giron-Hyakushutsu” of GFJ on September 25, 2015.)**