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More Broken Windows Are Found around the Globe

By TAKAHATA Akio

During the 1980s, New York City was called one of the worst crime-plagued cities in the United States: the streets were in disorder and people were exhausted. However, urban security was restored under the leadership of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani who upheld the “Zero Tolerance” policy in the 1990s. The key to Giuliani’s approach is the “Broken Windows Theory”, that is, “If some broken or vandalized windows of the building are left unrepaired, people will fall into moral lapses, and eventually, all the windows will be broken.”

When I see the world today, things seem to go as stated in that theory. Ever since US President Barack Obama declared that the United States was ‘not the world’s policeman’ (September 10, 2013), a police-less uncertainty is prevailing around the globe. In Syria, Iran, Ukraine, and so forth, actions ignoring international rules and destroying international order are taking place with impunity. In East Asia, China takes increasingly assertive actions to expand their maritime interests by force. Of course, the United States is not responsible for everything that happens in the world, but there is no denying that the windows of peace and security have started to be broken here and there in the world.

After the end of the Cold War, the world order had been maintained under the American prestige and leadership, but now they started to weaken. There is no doubt that Chinese and Russian leaders noticed it and seized the opportunity. Symbolically, American and Europe just stood by and failed to take any effective measures, while the Russians proceeded promptly to invade Crimea in the south of Ukraine. When the United States decided to manifest militarily, it was too late.

In my opinion, this is partly because many American experts and media sources were so naive and optimistic as to believe that Russia would never resort to military intervention to Ukraine. Nevertheless, it was a fatal mistake that the Obama administration’s official ruled out any possibility of military action as a counter measure since the beginning. Had Obama put armed forces on high alert promptly based on information from satellites, and ordered the Mediterranean fleet to stand by,

these diversion actions could have prevented things from going worse.

Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates points out that President Obama and his staff do not trust the military, in his recent memoir. As Mr. Gates mentions, the president changed his mind at the last moment, and decided to refrain from military intervention in Syria. At present, it seems that he is preoccupied with withdrawal from Afghanistan. Some people in the United States ridicule that Obama's second term foreign policy and national security team including Secretary of State John Kerry and national Security Advisor Susan Rice is a B-team. Regarding recent problem in Ukraine, some experts criticize the Obama administration's response so harshly as to say even the Carter administration's improper diplomacy toward the Soviet Union during the Cold War era was not this bad.

There was a stark contrast between the Pentagon's Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and China's defense budget for 2014, both of which were released in mid-March and reported on the same day by Japanese media. There is nothing strange that the QDR states clearly that the United States will maintain the strategy of rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region, but it is inevitable that the defense expenditure will drop sharply as a result of sequestration. On the other hand, China's defense expenditure is set for double digit growth, as if they ridicule the lack of will and money to sustain defense level on the American side.

Obama administration's real feature as shown in its reaction to the crisis of the Ukrainian crisis, such as poor preparations based on optimistic assumption, lackadaisical responses to the reality, and ineffective counter measures cast a dark shadow over Japan's security. In case of Chinese invasion to the Senkaku Islands, instead of Crimea, would the US government merely explore settlement through "negotiations" or just impose economic sanctions without taking military countermeasures?

According to a famous quotation, "Power without justice is tyranny, justice without power is inefficient". In this case, President Putin is the former, and President Obama is the latter. If President Putin pushes through his way like this, the Northern Territories will never return to Japan. In order to prevent military clashes among major powers, it is indispensable to build up strong deterrence and check-and-restraint capabilities, and to respond resolutely to the crisis. The global community must not allow any change of national borders and territories by force. Shinzo Abe's cabinet should act closely with the United States and Europe, and denounce aggressive behavior of Russia and China.

(This is an English translation of the article written by Mr. TAKAHATA Akio,

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