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My reflection on “North Korea’s Missiles and ‘Ghost Boats’ Causing National Catastrophe”

By NAKAYAMA Taro

An article entitled “North Korea’s Missiles and ‘Ghost Boats’ are a National Crisis to Japan” by Akamine Kazuhiko, which was posted on an e-forum “Hyakka-Seiho (“Hundred Flowers in Full Bloom” in Japanese)” of The Japan Forum on International Relations on January 20, 2018, critically pointed out that “pretentious ‘pressure’ by the Japanese government and an ostrich policy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA) have little impact on North Korea.” I would like to make some comments on his remarks, from a neutral standpoint. I know someone who works for MOFA and has to overwork most days due to the time differences between Japan and the region which he is assigned to work on. I remember he said with pale face “when I am busy, I go home only to get changed.” Also, diplomatic work requires great expenses for business networking especially when abroad. For instance, officers of MOFA often buy memberships for private members’ clubs even if that does not suit to their actual life standards, only to access to useful information for their work. That cannot be covered by the public fund, however, and results in them having to pay out of their pocket money. Their wives as well starts inviting guests over to their temporary home abroad, and the two end up coming back to Japan utterly exhausted. However, Japanese critics are often harsh on the MOFA officers claiming that “they spend their time abroad as if they are on holiday,” the view of which a bestseller book “The Wall of a Fool (Baka no Kabe)” well delivers.

Next, as to the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (JSDF), there still are some teachers who boldly call the children of JSDF of tax racketeers in Japan. That suggests the dignity and status of the staffs of JSDF are disrespected in Japan, while in other countries the militants are seen as the defenders of the country. Although I am not a militant myself, by seeing how the militants are treated coldly in Japan I cannot help feeling that is asking too much when they are relied on as the last resolution at the times of security crisis. If we need their dedicated work to the national security at the events of national catastrophe, we have to better facilitate their social environment in return. A popular rumour in South and North Korea these days tell “because Trumps is originally a business person, he would work on

'dealings.' That is, although he is said to disagree with Tillerson, the two might be secretly working on unconditional US-North Korea negotiations which is what Tillerson has suggested."

I also heard someone saying that Trump criticised Japan for not shooting the North Korean missiles when North Korea launched missiles over Japan to the Pacific Sea. It seems that the US is feeling threats not from the North Korea's discharge but from its "proliferation." As some media reported, the sanctions against North Korea that Abe's Japan and the US are have been obsessed with have some defects. Indeed, North Korea is secretly importing techniques, technicians and military equipment from China, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet countries. Even worse, there are a number of daily items that are of use in developed countries including Japan being diverted into North Korea to perfect nuclear instruments and missiles through South East Asian countries. In fact, there are some Japanese people who recently visited North Korea and saw many Japanese products and foods sold in shops. Akamine questioned in his article why Minister for Foreign Affairs Tanaka Makiko had not taken Kim Jong-nam as hostage when he had visited Japan in 2001, but my source tells that that was in line with a scenario the US suggested.

Diplomatic issues often have a side of outsmarting each other. It is often the case as well that, even if diplomatic issues involve in North Korea or China, the US ultimately dictates all. That brings to light importance to build a network of people who are pro-Japan since there is clear divisions within the US. Meanwhile, we need to pay attention to some moves in Japan that are to benefit North Korea or China. Recently in Japan, there are some criticisms that tell "Trump keeps blind eyes to South Korea," "President Moon received a level of hostility when he visited China" and "South Korea is isolated from Japan over the issue of 'Statue of Peace (so called Comfort Woman Statue) '." In reality, however, the US and South Korea fought together in the Korean War and Vietnam War from which the US had suffered after the World War II - the two countries are like fellow soldiers. There are people among the US Congress as well as in the society who stand up to protect South Korea when international security environment intensifies, which is far unlikely to happen in Japan where people have obviously enjoyed peace.

(This is an English translation of the article written by NAKAYAMA Taro, Adjunct Staff of a Nonprofit Organization, which originally appeared on the e-forum "Hyakka-Somei (Hundred Ducks in Full Voice)" of CEAC on December 15, 2017.)