

Speaking Out #79

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Badly chosen ambassador to China

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The importance of Japan's ambassadorship may increase at least temporarily as Foreign Minister Seiji Maehara abruptly resigned.. Just after former Itochu Corp. President Uichiro Niwa was appointed ambassador to China, he made such comment on Japan's North Korean policy that led me to view him as precarious: "As well as the resolution of the abduction issue, the restoration of Japan's diplomatic relations with North Korea may be the final goal and so, efforts to that end remain required (SankeiBiz, July 23, 2010)." The comment indicates no philosophy or imagination. At a time when even South Korean President Lee Myung-bak known as a middle-of-the-road pragmatist advocates a unification tax to prepare for a collapse of the North Korean government, a person who views the restoration of diplomatic relations with North Korea as a final goal may not be able to depict the future course of Japan-China relations.

Is "Jasmine Revolution" impossible for China?

At a foreign policy meeting of the Liberal Democratic Party on March 1, Niwa reportedly said, "Chinese people have no enthusiasm or ambition to overthrow the government even at the cost of their present livelihoods."

"We should not expect any event like the Jasmine Revolution in China," he was also quoted as saying. These remarks indicate that the ambassador underestimates Chinese people. It is not honorable for Japan to have an ambassador who does not feel any anger at or any problem with the suppressive Chinese government under which any citizens indicating any enthusiasm or ambition to overthrow the single-party dictatorship lose livelihoods as did Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo and his wife.

Niwa also made a controversial remark on July 26, 2010: "It (China's military expansion) may be natural for a big power." Then Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada defended the remark as a prelude to a conclusion that China's military spending should be more transparent. But the most important problem is that the Democratic Party of Japan government has passively observed China's hegemonic expansion.

Stop Japan's ODA to China

Given that China has outdone Japan to become the world's second largest

economy in terms of GDP and that the Japanese government's official development assistance guideline calls for paying sufficient attention to military spending, the development and production of weapons of mass destruction and missiles, arms exports and imports, the promotion of democratization, and the guarantee of human rights and freedom in ODA-receiving countries, the government must terminate economic assistance to China. In this respect as well, however, Niwa is cited as one of those who are the most reluctant to change the status quo.

Niwa has ever indicated a seemingly sound view: "When reading history textbooks in China, I feel that they are problematic. Chapters on the modern history cover various events regarding the war. Chinese should not be made Japan-hating." Instead of questioning the Chinese authorities about the distortion of history, however, Niwa voiced his hope to "tour China and undertake speeches to diffuse the fact that there are many good people in Japan." He may be complacent with such girlish idea. But the most precarious is a preposterous policy of the DPJ leadership including Okada who said Niwa's appointment as ambassador to China would "test whether ambassadors from the private sector would take hold" in Japan.

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