

Don't Follow or Be Afraid of China

Tadae Takubo

Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping ended his five-day U.S. visit on February 17, concluding the trip as China describes “completely successful.” Reasons for the conclusion are uncertain. As U.S. excitement seen just after the inauguration of the Obama Administration has gone with the wind, the administration is expected to ratchet up pressure on China to “abide by international rules.” The problem is that China's second largest military and economic power in the world could prompt its neighboring countries to be unconsciously drawn to China. This is a great matter of concern to me.

Growing calls to abide by international rules

The Obama-Xi talks clearly indicated that the United States has lost excitement. While President Obama, phrasing things diplomatically, asked questions about China's attitude toward the renminbi or yuan currency problem, trade practices and the U.N. anti-Syria resolution, the Chinese side made no straight answers. Since the inauguration of the Obama Administration, Vice President Joseph Biden has frequently contacted the Chinese side including Vice President Xi. The New York Times reported that a luncheon at the State Department to welcome Xi on the day before the Obama-Xi meeting was in “a sober and businesslike mood.” The luncheon room was rocked by laughter and applause only when Biden quipped regarding China's theft of intellectual property, the newspaper said. We can imagine the atmosphere.

I think that the only request the United States now makes to China is to “abide by international rules.” In his address in Canberra last November, President Obama urged China to abide by international law, international regulations and marine freedom, checking Chinese military operations in the East and South China Seas and other waters. Through his State of the Union address and his talks with Xi, Obama reiterated the U.S. request for China to abide by universal values.

Japan should refuse to be subordinated

Even after Xi becomes China's top leader, the United States and China may continue to be bargaining. In the meantime, China may economically bind its neighboring countries and threaten them with diplomatic pressures backed by its military power. Some in Japan's ruling and opposition camps have made a “equilateral triangle” proposal for Japan to have an even-handed policy on China and the United States. Behind the proposal may be their fears about China. The fears may be leading

them to unconsciously use the proposal for their self-justification.

As a matter of course none may criticize China in North Korea. I have heard that few bold criticisms against China are seen in South Korea. The future course of Taiwan's Ma Ying-jeou administration is worrisome. Despite Okinawa being one of Japan's prefectures, an Okinawa business leader has openly avowed Japan as a friend and China as a relative. In Japan, Prince Shotoku (574-622) flatly refused to be subordinated by the Chinese Continent. Such traditional Japanese genes should be more radiant in the mainstream of international community trying to abide by universal values.

Tadae Takubo is Vice President, Japan Institute for National Fundamentals.