

**S. Koreans Should Remonstrate with President Lee**

Tsutomu Nishioka

South Korean President Lee Myung-bak's sudden visit to the Japan-claimed Takeshima Islands and his impolite remark on the Japanese Emperor have triggered deterioration of Japan-South Korean relations. At least, Japanese people's feeling toward South Korea plunged to the worst level since the two countries normalized relations in 1965.

**Stupidity to demand identical historical perceptions**

This is because President Lee unilaterally asked Japan to adapt its historical perceptions to those of South Korea. Even though Japan has never withdrawn its territorial claim to the Takeshimas, some South Koreans groundlessly assert that Japan has begun to make a territorial claim in line with its shift to the right.

When President Lee invited the Emperor to visit South Korea during his Japan trip in 2008, he did not mention the Emperor's apology to Korean independence activists as a condition for the invitation as brought up in the recent remark. While An Jung-geun who assassinated Hirofumi Ito has been a hero in South Korea, he has been viewed in Japan as a terrorist who killed a Japanese leader. The Emperor is the center of Japan, representing the national identity. President Lee does not understand that any impolite remark against the Emperor amounts to a blasphemy against the entire Japanese people.

Meanwhile, Japan and South Korea have maintained good economic relations. From the normalization of relations to the Chun Doo-hwan administration age, Japan provided South Korea with economic aid including compensation for the past, while South Korea took effective advantage of the Japanese aid for achieving economic growth. In trade, South Korea has imported mainly materials, parts and production equipment from Japan for producing exports. Japan and South Korea have thus maintained mutually beneficial economic relations.

In security, Japan and South Korea share the values of freedom,

democracy and human rights and have formed military alliances with the United States, making the two countries quasi allies. They also have common enemies in that they counter North Korea's hereditary dictatorship and China's one-party dictatorship. Therefore, Japan-South Korea confrontation can benefit North Korea and China.

### **Main enemy is North Korea**

Our Japan Institute for National Fundamentals has proposed South Korea's peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula based on freedom and democracy as meeting Japan's national interests and tried to promote strategic cooperation between Japan and South Korea. We have also stepped up our exchange with South Korean conservatives. The National Action Headquarters, a South Korean patriotic, conservative movement group, has published an opinion advertisement titled "Our main enemy is not the Japanese people but the North Korean regime." "Let's try to prevent sound Japanese citizens from becoming hostile against or disfavoring South Korea while countering the Japanese government's arm-twisting resolutely," it said. Some conservative intellectuals have also made similar assertions.

But their remarks indicate that they have failed to correctly identify what the Japanese people are angered at. The latest deterioration of bilateral relations has been triggered by President Lee's inappropriate remarks and actions. Particularly, his impolite remark against the Emperor has deeply injured the soul of the Japanese. Historical perceptions and views on territories differ naturally from country to country. If our South Korean friends view Japan and its citizens as friends, they should remonstrate with the president who made absurd remarks and actions, and should agree with the Japanese that Japan and South Korea should refrain from inflicting their respective historical perceptions on each other.

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