

Japan needs far-reaching Eurasian strategy (3)

By YAMAUCHI Masayuki

<Japan should mediate>

Japan can play a significant role in talking both Iran and Syria into assuming their respective share of responsibility as parties with a stake in the peace process for Iraq. Syrian President Bashar Assad wants to visit Japan. The Japanese government should invite Assad, who is seeking a dialogue with Washington, to visit Tokyo, a step that could help build confidence between the United States and Syria.

Furthermore, Japan should call on the United States to refrain from resorting to force against Iran and mediate between Washington and Tehran to start a dialogue and to help them overcome their differences. Iran should not be allowed to follow what North Korea, Iran's "unholy" partner in clandestine nuclear and missile development, did in the recent round of six-party negotiations--making gains by causing trouble.

Japan's new Eurasian strategy should be to have Washington once again recognize that North Korea is more dangerous than Iran, as Pyongyang has not shown remorse for its dual terrorism--nuclear weapons development and the abduction of Japanese. Thus, the new strategy should focus on an international effort to unite in driving a wedge between North Korea and Iran and scuttling their common aim of arming themselves with nuclear arms.

In a related development, the so-called Second Armitage-Nye Report--which was released in February by former U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and Harvard University Prof. Joseph Nye--forecasts that "North Korea will continue to build nuclear weapons to and beyond 2020." The report stresses the importance for Japan and the United States to work together on strategies in Asia and the rest of the world.

Japan's new Eurasian strategy should include Foreign Minister Taro Aso's concept of the "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity" and also the Armitage-Nye Report's doctrine. This approach could act as a useful "tool" with which to observe the situations in the Middle East and Northeast Asia, which are geographically far apart, as if watching the situation compositely through a pair of binoculars.

In a famous kabuki story, "Sukeroku Yukari no Edo Zakura" (Sukeroku, the Flower of Edo), a handsome character looking for a stolen sword, keeps adapting his tactics to suit the moment until his search comes to a successful end. The new Eurasian strategy, too, should ensure that such multifaceted flexibility is at its core. (End)

(This is the text of an article by Mr. YAMAUCHI Masayuki, Professor of Tokyo University, which was originally posted in “Daily Yomiuri” on March 4, 2007.)