

What was Wrong with "War on Terror"?

By ITO Kenichi

An Article of UK Foreign Minister Grabs Attention

An article of UK Foreign Minister David Miliband has grabbed world-wide attention. The article was contributed to "The Guardian" dated 15 January 2009 and stated that the concept of "War on Terror" was wrong. The reason it attracted attention of so many seemed because it implied in their eyes that even UK, the most trusted comrade-in-arms of US in "War on Terror," had finally broken away from US, providing yet another occasion for reaffirming the error of US.

Looking at Miliband's statement from my own perspective, which is contrary to the viewpoint of so many who pay attention to the same article, I think the way we comprehend his statement is directly relevant to the way we look at the world in the 21st century.

In my theory, the human history until the year 1945 is defined as the "War Era," which should be distinguished from the ensuing "Cold War Era (an era free from hot wars)" and the post-Cold War "No-War Era(an era free of wars)." For more details of my argument, please refer to "The Advent of No War Era--- An Introductory Summary of 'Shin Senso-ron'" (http://www.jfir.or.jp/e/pdf/shin_senso-ron.pdf). However, "No-War Era" in this context is far from signifying a Garden-of-Eden era of peace and stability. Instead, it signifies an era in which "wars," traditional sources of destruction and instability, are taken over by "conflicts," no less formidable threats than "wars." In different words, we can also say that in "No-War Era," when "wars" are receding into the background, "conflicts" are emerging as a major object of operation for "military forces." As "Military Operations Other Than War(MOOTW)" gain in importance, the task of "military forces" is evolving into that of "police forces."

It was the September 11 terrorist attacks that clearly heralded the advent of such an era.

Tragic Unawareness of a Historical Transition

In my view, with the September 11 incident as a turning point, mankind had entered an unprecedented security environment or situation that may be termed as "Conflict Era" or "No-War

Era." However, then US President Bush declared, "This is not a terrorism, but a war!" This was contrary to my understanding of the incident.

As I understood from the outset that we were witnessing the advent of the "Conflict Era," though I supported the efforts of President Bush and US in the "War on Terror", I must confess on this occasion that I was seriously bewildered by his wrong stress on the concept of "War" as in the expression of "War on Terror."

In the above, I said, "the way we comprehend his(Miliband's) statement is directly relevant to the way we look at the world in the 21st century." The reason I said so was because I wanted to point out that we in the 21st century would live in unprecedented turbulence of the times which I called "Conflict Era," and in order to survive this turbulence we must get rid of many obsessions associated with the conventional wisdoms of the "War Era."

On the notion of, or the call for "War on Terror," Miliband commented that it was "an attempt to build solidarity for a fight against a single shared enemy. But the foundation for solidarity between peoples and nations should be based not on who we are against, but on the idea of who we are and the values we share." Then, he went on to say that it "also implied that the correct response was primarily military. We must respond to terrorism by championing the rule of law, not subordinating it, for it is the cornerstone of the democratic society."

"Wars" in the "War Era" were waged on the tacit assumption that "warring parties are equal to each other in value." I suspect that former President Bush had unintentionally granted the terrorists an equal status in value to that of US, by advocating "War on Terror."

On the Advent of the "Conflict Era"

This was the tragedy of the Bush Administration, that failed to discern between the "War Era" and the "No-War Era." If positioned correctly in the historical context of the advent of the "Conflict Era," terrorists can and must be identified as nobody but criminals, who commit the crime of murdering the entire humanity.

War as an instrument of national policy has long been outlawed since the Kellogg-Briand Pact (The General Treaty for Renunciation of War) of 1928. Hence, theoretically speaking, "wars" are phenomena which belong to an era of the past. If we read the Miliband's statement in this context, it is quite clear that his real intention was not to advocate UK's estrangement from US, but to

propose that it should seek a renewed cooperation with the new Administration of US led by Barack Obama.

Here, careful observation reveals that what constitutes the ultimate threat to the peace and security of the humanity in the 21st century is not an outbreak of World War III between states, but the proliferation of nuclear weapons and their falling into the hands of terrorists. Struggle for the eradication of terrorism will continue. It will not be a "war," but will still be a "struggle" that is to involve the whole humanity.

The Japanese alone cannot be allowed to be bystanders amid this struggle. What can we do to contribute to the peace and stability of the world? This is the question that the Japanese must now answer.

(This is the English translation of an article written by Prof. ITO Kenichi, President, The Japan Forum on International Relations, which originally appeared in the column "Seiron" of The Sankei Shimbun on February 25, 2009.)