

# The International Community and the Iraqi Crisis

By Wakamatsu Kenji

The United States and Britain have begun a war against Iraq in the absence of another United Nations (UN) resolution, and amid unprecedented divisions among the United States and its European allies. There is concern about the repercussions this could have on international relations. It seems that the world is entering an important turning point. Various questions have been raised, such as the validity of preemptive strikes against international terrorism, the subsequent weakening of the UN in terms of its ability to maintain peace, and the changing alliances in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The United States declared war on terrorism in the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks. Iraq was singled out as a country aiding terrorists. The United States demanded that Iraq cooperate with UN inspectors and give up its weapons of mass destruction. Baghdad promised to give up these weapons after the 1991 Gulf War, but it had violated UN resolutions by its failure to do so. Washington took a hard line, threatening to oust Saddam Hussein by force if he did not cooperate with inspectors and provide proof that he had given up his weapons.

France and Germany called for more inspections, arguing that war should only be a last resort. Russia and China held a similar view. Most UN member states outside the Security Council also agreed, making the United States and Britain feel unexpectedly isolated. There have been anti-war demonstrations in the United States and elsewhere around the globe, involving more than 10 million people. The tide of international opinion cannot be ignored.

What are the reasons for this opinion? People are concerned that a war would only hurt many civilians and produce vast numbers of refugees. There is concern that the war could further destabilize the

Middle East by fanning anti-U.S. sentiment among Arabs and increasing the risk of more terrorist attacks. The United States is optimistic about the war. It believes that war would only last about four to six weeks, minimizing the economic repercussions in terms of skyrocketing oil prices and falling share prices. However, Iraq's disparate opposition groups, comprised of Kurds, Sunnis, Shi'ites and others, have expressed reservations about Washington's plans for U.S. forces to occupy Iraq for at least two years in order to establish a democratic regime. Building a new Iraq won't be easy. This postwar task could be just as difficult or even more difficult compared to Afghanistan.

Another point of concern, and one for Japan in particular, is North Korea's unequivocal pursuit of its nuclear program and ballistic missile tests. These moves clearly violate the Pyongyang Declaration made by Prime Minister Koizumi Jun-ichiro and North Korean leader Kim Jong Il, as well as other international agreements with the United States and South Korea. Japan is facing a direct threat. The U.S. government believes that North Korea could possess six to eight nuclear warheads within the next few months. China and Russia must be lobbied to exert their influence over North Korea to put a brake on this nuclear program. There must be discussions in a new international framework. Furthermore, if the situation warrants them, the UN or the relevant countries must also apply sanctions.

Pyongyang has been engaging in risky behavior, which could trigger a confrontation. North Korean MiG fighters recently buzzed a U.S. surveillance plane in the Japan Sea. It is hoped that the United States, South Korea and Japan will work closely on the question of North Korea, reacting in a cool and careful

manner to prevent any unforeseen situation. The international concern over Iraq must not give a wrong signal to North Korea.

Japan says it is keen to help in humanitarian matters, in the postwar reconstruction of Iraq and refugee relief. Japan isn't keen to aid North Korea unless the nuclear issue and the issue of North Korea's abductions of Japanese nationals are resolved. But there is an opportunity for a new era in East Asia, if the relevant countries can work together to bring North Korea into the framework of peace.

## COMING UP

The next issue of *JJTI* will analyze Japan's economy in terms of its trade and commerce, with reference to the 2003 version of the *White Paper on International Trade*. We will also examine educational reforms in Japan's universities, whose aim is to cultivate internationally minded citizens.

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