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**The Worldwide Consumption Reduction Policy as the General
Strategy against the Contemporary Economic Crisis
----For the Protection of Nature as well as Culture and Human Being**

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Abstract : Although the financial crisis now going on is originated directly from the Wall-Street-biased economic policy in the United States since 1990s, we can trace it up more to the Neo-liberal policies after around 1980, and farther more back to the expansionist policies after the World War II, and ultimately to the capitalist idea of marginal revolution in the 19th century. To avoid more tragedy, we should cut off the chain of the circuit of capital. What is the adequate way, then, to cut off the chain? That is the question here. This paper, referring the overwhelming mass consumption by middle citizens in the developed countries, proposes the policy of the general consumption reduction among the developed countries, and discusses some important conditions when the policy really practiced.

Keywords: Consumption Reduction; Contemporary Economic Crisis; Middle Citizen; “Labor Value” and “Utility Value” Theories; Protection of Nature, Culture, Human being

Introduction

The financial crisis, which began to burst out in 2007 in the United States and is still magnifying and spreading into the whole globe in 2009, seems to reach one of the peaks of human folly. Under the well-designed financial system, how many people have lost their fortunes including their houses in this crisis? Under the highly developed technology, how many workers have lost their jobs in the world? Under the extremely affluent information, how many citizens have lost their hopes in the future in this human society? It seems to be impossible to calculate the amount of such losses. Not a few people begin to say that the contemporary crisis is just the one appears once a hundred years. Yes, it might not be wrong! Indeed the stupidity seems to have gone up to its peak!

Though we can say at this moment that the financial crisis now going on is, as

everyone knows, originated directly from the Wall-Street-biased economic policy in the United States since 1990s, we can trace it not only up to the Neo-liberal policies after around 1980, and back to the early days' expansionist policies after the World War II, but also to the idea of the "utility value" view of economics 19th century.

To avoid more tragedy, we should cut off the chain of this capitalist circuit. What is the adequate way, then, to cut off the chain? That is the question here.

This paper, referring the overwhelming mass consumption by middle citizens in the developed countries, proposes the policy of the general consumption reduction among the developed countries, and discusses some important conditions when the policy really practiced.

Over-piled Over-repeated Anti-human Mechanisms of Capitalist System Today

Before discussing the general consumption reduction policy, it should be better to stop for a while to consider about such economic problems as new types of poverty, financial crisis and drastic declines of economic figures now going on. It would be clear that all are the results of over-pursuance of capitalistic activities.

1st, these economic problems, especially the financial crashes, are originated directly from the Wall-Street-biased economic policy in the United States since 1990s. Such policy as orientated the United States to be a Financial State was established under the Secretaries of the U. S. Treasury, Lawrence Summers and, especially, Robert Rubin. This Democrat Secretary, who is more republican than any other Republican political leaders, evacuated the obstacles between banks and securities firms, and removed thoroughly the regulations for financial trades in the Wall Street, and thus arranged the comfortable environment for the investors/speculators. This is the very starting line of the consumption enlargement policy under the next Bush Administration, especially the housing policy ("private home for everyone" policy, as the perfection of individual consumption), and, it is needless to say, this turned into the origin of financial crisis today. Excessive money which lost suitable targets to invest not only in Europe but also in emerging economies like China and India had concentrated into the Wall Street, and made world-wide mechanism of money circuit. The financial crisis today is an inevitable result of state strategy that bet all economic matters on finance after giving up manufacturing.

2nd, investigating more into these economic problems today, we can realize that there have been the over-inclination into the Neo-liberal policies since around 1980. It came from a strong antipathy against counter-measures to the Great Depression in 1930s and Keynesian policies in 1960s in the United States, and we should recognize it as extremely intense trend in the economic policies as well as economic thought. The fact, that the

main stream of Neo-liberal policies do not easily be changed even though how many enterprises goes to bankrupt and how numerous number of workers lose their jobs, shows the strength of American citizens' dislike to Keynesian policies. The Neo-liberal policies, therefore, tends to run away in the United States. Based on such a situation as over-inclination to the Neo-liberalism, the surface over-protrusion of global money games in Wall Street realized.

3rd, the principal origin of contemporary depression is, no doubt, a result of over-inclination to the expanding reproduction since the end of WWII. After Keynesian policy was taken to be a President's Economics in the United States, mass consumption turned into a virtue instead of a vice. And under this point of economic view, mass production, mass sale, mass consumption, and mass dumping in these several decades have been regarded as normal activities for contemporary economic life. Moreover under this expansionist point of view, the pursuance for more money and/or more profit turned to be normal activities for contemporary economic life, too. Farther more, it turned into normal that every economic problems, if happened, have to be solved by expansion of economic pie.

4th, we should not miss the fact that there lies the over-inclination to "utility value" view of economy, i.e. a view of "money is ultimate" instead of a view of "human is ultimate". We can trace the origin of this inclination up to the "utility value" theory born in Vienna in the latter half of 19th century. Essentially human being have been working and making his/her life by cooperation each other. Therefore everybody had been aware that human being itself and human working itself is precious. And this is the very reason that the "labor value" theory is established preceding before of the establishment of capitalist economy. As the production and the exchange of commodities spread and as market economy penetrate over the society, however, the consciousness of principality of human being itself or human labor itself had gradually been diminishing, and on the contrary, had been expanding that of superiority of commodities, money and capital instead. Just at the time the "utility value" theory born. The "utility value" view spread especially in the United States where the accumulation of historical agonies and cultural heritages were poor. It is not only rich man's behavior to devote him/herself to join the gold rush in the early days of this country, or to throw all his/her money or property on casino or speculation. Such atmosphere brought this country to the exceeded inclination to "utility value" view.

All the economic problems today has basically spouted on the over-inclination to "utility value" view of economy as the bottom stratum. Upon this stratum the over-inclination to the expanding reproduction lay, and still more upon these two strata the over-inclination into the Neo-liberal policies came to appear, and finally on all of these strata the over-inclination into the Wall-Street-biased economic policy realized.

The Middle Citizens in the Developed Countries as the Actual Supporters of Capitalist Economic System

I have been advocating an understanding that argues about the middle citizens in the developed countries turned into an important partner of the actual rulers on the global economic activities in these several decades. On this idea, not a few discussants have been criticizing in different ways. One of the major criticisms is that each of middle citizens have just only very few stocks or assets even if they have. Another major criticism is that the middle citizens as a whole have not any integrated organization available to govern either their nation or the world. There are also many comments emphasizing the role of mass media that stir up consumption on the one hand and conceal their actual poverty on the other.

What the important point of my argument is that the middle citizens (I dare say “middle citizens” NOT “middle class”) in the developed countries are benefited through either well-developed market economy or well-developed social security system. For example, the majority of white people in the United States works and leads his/her life in the developed market economy and share each other the effective market functions, not only commodity market or financial market but also labor market. I have been emphasizing that they are able to get almost any goods and services everywhere at any time they want through well-developed market if it works well. Moreover, under well-functioned market economy, they are able to get even money relatively easily, which is necessary to get goods and services, by acquiring profitable job through well developed labor market, if they feel necessity. Therefore they are able to behave as if they are the people in the middle class like landowners or managers of small firms. Their consciousnesses are, therefore, getting by and by to be similar, as far as the market economy works well enough, to that of the people in the middle class. As for the European developed countries, the well-developed social welfare system act for the similar role of market economy, i.e. not only foods and materials necessary for daily life as well as housing or education and job training but also security networks assure relatively agreeable life for ordinary citizens. Therefore people’s consciousnesses gradually change from that of working class to that of middle citizens, too. Even though the middle citizens have not the integrated organization to govern their state, the well-developed market economic system itself (in the U. S.) or the well-developed social welfare system itself (in EU countries) seems to function actually the nation-wide governing institution like the state organization itself or pressure group itself if we look at the function through as big eyes as country-wide.

There is another important point concerning my argument. The huge amount of material conditions to fill the market and welfare systems are always carried from a

numerous number of developing countries into the developed countries. The fact suggests us to understand that the citizens in the developed countries, whether they belong to either upper dominating elites' community or just middle citizens' group, are benefited by the labor force in the developing countries. In short, this spectacle seems as if the middle citizens as well as upper class in the developed countries exploit the working people in the developing countries through global system of the market economy.

There may be another big room of controversy around my argument. That is concerning with the recent polarization of the middle citizens in the developed countries. Indeed, the increasing number of ruined citizens under the neo-liberal economic policy, especially under the financial crisis in these years, seems at a glance to be fallen down into the lower group. We should look out, however, that the ruined citizen even if they have lost not only their jobs but also their houses and sometimes their own families, they are yet the participants in the market or welfare systems thanks to living in the developed country. In spite they have banished out from the market or welfare system, they should not be regarded immediately as same people as on the working people in the developing countries, because they are just expelled from their developed market or welfare system, and often the system yet exist at the moment quite close to them. Generally, the objective position of the expelled and ruined citizens in the developed countries is not same as that of the labor force in the developing countries, and we should not line up and discuss them mixed together on the same dimension.

The World-wide General Consumption Reduction Policy as the Distinguished Strategy for us Today

As far as the economic problems including financial crisis today is the results of over-piled and over-repeated anti-human mechanisms of capitalist system, the strategy for us to overcome the problems would be to stop or at least to lower the pace of capitalist circuit, i.e., such circuit as mass production in the manufacturing factories in all over the world, mass trading of commodities as well as huge amount of money, mass consumption not only by big enterprises but also by a great number of ordinary people, and moreover mass dumping especially in the developed countries. This economic system has established as so gigantic mechanism and looks too difficult already for the ordinary people to stop or lower any circuit that it seems there is no room for us to challenge it.

Now, the boycott movement against British products led by Mahatma Gandhi, or some other similar movements in the modern world history, as for examples, suggests us a salvage strategy. Looking for a rout to get out of the abovementioned highly connected economic circuits, one might aware there remains just one field that is both exceedingly effective and convenient for the ordinary people easily to begin and join. That is the

consumption reduction strategy, namely the worldwide movement to lower the pace of consumption level as a whole.

Given the citizens in the developed countries who are considered to be fortunate position in the contemporary world, consume overwhelming major part of commodities in the world, and still more the world economic circuit works upon their mass consumption and mass production for their consumption, then there might be a great meaning to cut down the consumption of ordinary citizens in the developed countries.

The world-wide general consumption reduction strategy as a whole is extraordinary beneficial in the following meanings. 1st, it is effective to prevent too much exploitation of nature, i.e. not only exploitation of raw materials and fuels, but also destruction of atmosphere and water, mountains and oceans, etc. 2nd, it is favorable for the protection of human culture including traditional arts and historical heritages from its damage through too rapid processes of material civilization. 3rd, it is good for human being itself from overworking, overstressing, disease as well as fat through materially over-developed capitalist civilization.

The distinguished meaning of the world-wide general consumption reduction strategy, however, does not limited only in the abovementioned items. 4th, it is relatively easy way to shorten or minimize the economic differences between individuals, areas or regions, and nations, not necessarily through the controlled economy but just under the market economy. 5th, it is useful for the developing economies/countries to lower the goal they have been feeling to catch up with, like such extravagant goal as to popularize cars for every citizen.

Still more, this strategy has farther excellent merits as follows. 6th, it is able to be organized by just ordinary citizens, and farther more, it is able to be begun at whenever and wherever just they decide. Indeed the characteristic, “whoever can start or participate at whenever at wherever”, would be the predominant point as world-wide public movement by ordinary citizens. 7th, if this movement could catch a good numbers of joiners, the real effect will widen thanks to the number of participants, therefore it is available even though under the conditions either each citizen’s cut to consume is only slight or the strategy could not be adopted as government policy.

Mass consumption is quite vital for capitalist accumulation as the basic conditions of production or trading commodities as well as money. It is surely no doubt that the consumption reduction is strongly harmful for capitalist enterprises and financial institutions. The worldwide reduction of consumption in these several months shows the evidence clearly, too.

Some Important Points for the Consumption Reduction Strategy

On the general consumption reduction strategy, even though its progressive meaning is quite

agreeable, some unexpected questions may happen to be proposed. Anyhow, if one can understand the general outline, then one should devise details to think out what way is available to harmonize with the general outline. The general consumption reduction strategy, of course, would be available for contemporary human being as far as it would be carried out with some indispensable conditions.

1st, it is very important to manage the movement not drastically to destroy the economic circuit. Given the extraordinary ratio of common people's consumption affects on the whole national economy, radical reduction of consumption will inevitably cause to decline of economic activities and damage not only the corporations but also the consumers, especially the lower group of society. Therefore such low intensive policies as not destructive for lower income group and small businesses would be desirable. Needless to say, such low intensive policies as not cut off violently the economic growth in developing countries, too, would be desirable. To reserve the room usually to adjust the inconsistency is greatly important. Even though the pace of consumption reduction would go slowly, the movement should be put forward steadily.

2nd, it is very important to cut down the consumption level especially among developed countries in advance. Referable good example here is the Kyoto Protocol of 1997 that arranged the reduction of discharge for carbonic acid and some other gasses, i.e. the reduction of 8 percent of such gasses for EU, 7 percent for the United States, and 6 percent for Nippon (Japan). Like that, the reduction policy of a certain percent of consumption should be arranged among the developed nations in the near future, and along this policy the project of economic development with consumption-restrained growth should be introduced for the developing countries. By the way, such trading business as emission trading recognized in Kyoto Protocol should never be accepted in the international agreement of the consumption-reduction.

3rd, it is very important, too, that the consumption reduction policy should be connected with the control policy against financial institutions, of course including various types of investment "funds". This measure is definitely inevitable for this policy in order to control the overfull money to run away as speculation. The meaning will be obvious if one will look at the financial crisis in around 1997 and now.

4th, it is vital for this policy, too, to oppose any type of wars, invasions, military conflicts and also production of weapons whereas there are any reason to attack enemies. No one will be able to deny the meaning if one will remember the process to overcome 1930s' Great Depression neither through the New Deal measures nor constructing "bloc" but the WWII. The fact suggests us how new war and/or mass consumption of weapons are decisive to get over economic problems and depression. Not to allow the "way out" to make and consume weapons instead of mass consumption by ordinary people, it will be essential to oppose any kind of warfare.

The excellence as a new type of people's broad movement of the consumption reduction strategy is not only in the point that it is a way of development of the Kyoto Protocol of 1997. The more excellence is, thus, also in the point that it is inevitably

combined with the recent urgent world-wide task for the control of financial institutions, and after all with the ultimate world-wide task for the anti-war.

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