

Global Responsibilities

By Takeshi Sasaki

With the end of the Cold War and the impending 50th anniversary of Pearl Harbor, the Japanese media have been running more stories indicating dissatisfaction with the Japan-U.S. alliance. The term *kenbei* (antipathy toward the United States) featured prominently in the August *Voice*, and the August *Shokun* had an article entitled "Distancing Ourselves from the United States." As well as being an indication of Japanese attitudes, this is also indicative of how anti-Japanese and *kenbei* attitudes fly across the Pacific and then echo back on each other in a mutually reinforcing pattern.

One of the most talked about books this year, for example, was *The Coming War with Japan* by George Friedman and Meredith Lebard. As Glen Fukushima has commented in the July 12 *Asahi Journal*, the irony is that this book was not a best-seller in the United States, and "most Americans would probably be amazed to hear that it was selling so well in Japan. In fact, many Americans may even have felt apprehensive at the fact that Japanese were reading such works so avidly." And the irony is compounded by the fact that many of the Japanese readers are reading the book because they assume that it has a wide following in the United States.

Earlier expansionism

One of the most compelling arguments in the "distancing" camp is to be found in Shinkichi Eto and Keiichiro Kobori's "The Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere Adventure" in the August *Shokun*. In this dialogue, Eto says that he is opposed to using the term "Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere" in talking about Japan's relations with the rest of Asia because it has connotations of earlier expansionism that could reinforce perceptions of economic-based arrogance. While Kobori argues that the term should be revived and used in discussing

Japanese ideals, Eto states that he is opposed to the term not because of opposition to the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere ideals but because of what happened in its name and because it is imperative that Japan heed the deep-rooted anti-Japanese sentiment that lingers throughout Asia.

But more interesting than their perceptions of the past is that these two agree on the need to preserve the Japan-U.S. alliance. Even Kobori, who prides himself on his anti-Americanism, favors the alliance. This is, I suspect, an indication of the limits to *kenbei* advocacy in Japan. Given that simple disdain for the United States is not a policy, what is to become of the alliance with the United States and what kinds of policies should Japan adopt toward the rest of Asia?

Terumasa Nakanishi's "A New Japan-U.S. Order for Asia" in the August *Voice* says that the time for wondering if the Cold War will also end in Asia is past. Instead, he says, a new political game has already started in Southeast Asia and Japan will have no choice but to move closer to the rest of Asia. Among the reasons he gives for this new approach are East Asia's increasing interdependence, the heightened Japanese role in East Asia's multipolar political system, and the fact that the people with the strongest anti-Japanese memories are retiring from active leadership.

At the same time, he notes that Japan's role in Asia is emerging as a new point of contention between Japan and the United States and that this issue has the potential for generating massive disagreement. Given all of this, Nakanishi argues that what is needed now is not a global Japan-U.S. partnership but an Asian Japan-U.S. partnership—and that this new Asian partnership should be used both to alleviate fears that the United States will scale back its commitment to Asia and to structure a new framework for cooperation that can be strongly supportive of the different development

modalities in this very diverse region. Rather than the Americanization of Asia, we should be thinking about the Asianization of America now being advanced by the Asian countries.

One other article that provided a broad perspective on the outlook for the Asia-Pacific area was Yuji Suzuki's "The Asia-Pacific Order and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty" in the August *Sekai*. In this, Suzuki argues that the other developments under way commensurate with the evolving international political situation as epitomized by the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the hegemonic order and the demise of one-country development have emerged in Asia not in one fell swoop as happened in Europe but gradually gaining steam from an early start, and he notes that there are many moves surfacing from within for the restructuring of the world order.

Political initiatives

One of the events that Suzuki attaches particular importance to is the fact that the lesser powers have been very active in taking new political initiatives, as in Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir's proposal for an East Asian Economic Group, while the major regional and extra-regional powers have been much more conservative about the structuring of a new world order in line with the new realities.

Seeking to explain this role reversal, Suzuki says that the smaller countries of the region are seeking to respond to the changing international climate while the big powers are paralyzed by it: the United States unsure of its own identity and not knowing if it wants to mold Asia in its own image or to incorporate more of Asia into its own practices, and Japan lurching from one idea to another in an effort to please several different audiences and to disguise its own lack of vision by describing itself variously as Japan for the Japanese, as an Asian country, and as a

member of the international community.

The way out of this situation, Suzuki says, is to reaffirm Japan-U.S. relations not as a bilateral relationship or one that is built on the sacrifices of the smaller countries of the region but as one that is able to respond supportively to these grassroots initiatives and has a role in the total Asia-Pacific context.

While it is clear that Suzuki and Nakamishi reject the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, it is obvious that hegemonic models—whether for Asia's Americanization or for its Japanization—are no longer relevant to the real world. From Kobori to Suzuki, all of these commentators are arguing the importance of Japan-U.S. relations—the importance of Japan's relations with what Suzuki has called the hub of Asia—to Asian issues. Seeing Japan-U.S. relations in Asian terms presents both opportunities and difficulties, but it is clear that Japan and the United States can no longer just keep arguing about rice, auto parts and other bilateral issues.

The question that then arises is whether or not Japan has the political will to elucidate the limitation of *kenbei* and to work together with the United States for a new order in Asia. This is much more important than the various specifics of global cooperation that are being discussed, for unless this is done, Asian issues will continue to be the plaything of the *kenbei* school. It is essential that President Bush's eventual trip to Japan be productive in the broader Asian sense.

French Prime Minister Cresson's vehemently anti-Japanese statements about economic aggression have been another focus of the commentary on international affairs. While it is much easier for economic relations to be the bulk of the relationship between Japan and Europe than it is between Japan and the United States, it is significant that the issue has flared up. Although some of the Japanese reaction to Cresson's remarks was simplistic, Sawako Takeuchi has provided two essays that explain the situation's gravity: "The Rhetoric of Cresson's Anti-Japanese Remarks" in the August *Voice* and "What Future for Japan-Europe Relations in the Wake of

Cresson's Anti-Japanese Remarks?" in the August *Seiron*.

Starting by pointing out that *laissez-faire* is a much less potent political force in France than it is in the United States, Takeuchi states that the trade issues between Japan and the EC are issues that go back to communication problems at the governmental level. Until Japan is willing and able to state forthrightly how it views trade, she says, there is almost no chance that Japan and Europe can work together as partners. Following up on this, she argues that Japanese companies see Europe not as a potential partner but as an investment opportunity and target market and that, as a result, Japanese companies are coldly single-minded in their pursuit of profit.

Winning trust

Because these Japanese firms give not the slightest thought to such questions as their responsibility for competition's victims or how to prevent the hollowing out of industries in countries they target, they are quite unprepared to work in partnership with their communities. A conscious effort will have to be made to devise structures for coexistence and co-prosperity if Japan expects to win the world's trust.

The question of assistance to the Soviet Union has also come up as an issue in Japan-Europe relations. The Soviet Union's future casts a long shadow over Western Europe's own future, and the issue of support for the Soviet Union (and for the countries of Eastern Europe) is thus a direct security consideration for the EC countries. It will be increasingly difficult to rein in the discord between Japan and the EC if Japanese companies are successful in Europe yet the two sides cannot come to a meeting of minds on this issue of assistance to the Soviet Union. The political and the economic are linked, and problems in one can have a fallout effect in the other. This is the real significance of the July 18 Japan-EC Joint Communique.

Turning our eyes inward, the domestic financial scandals were a major focus of attention in July and August. While there

was no massive outpouring of popular anger, Japan's economic system suffered a very real loss of credibility. As Yukio Suzuki wrote in "Japanese Capitalism's Systemic Corruption" in the September *Chuo Koron*, although one reality was that of fierce competition within the different market segments, the other reality was that of extensive mutual back-scratching by finance institutions and ordinary companies, by the government and industry, and among companies.

Many commentators thus argued the need to break away from the old pattern of having the Ministry of Finance supervise and shelter the industry. In "The Urgent Need to Create a Japanese SEC" in the September *Monthly Asahi*, for example, Naoki Tanaka argued that, given its massive financial assets and its status as the world's largest creditor country, it is Japan's responsibility—and in Japan's own best interests—to create new regulator institutions roughly patterned on the United States' Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) and to put Japan's financial markets in order.

There were also numerous articles arguing for deregulating trading commissions and for instituting stronger penalties for compensating preferred clients for their trading losses. The argument made by Keimei Kaizuka in "Deregulating Securities Trading Commissions" in the August 17-24 *Toyo Keizai*, for instance, is that fixed fees are a rich cash cow for the securities companies, providing profits that can then be used to compensate favored clients.

While the scandals may have been sparked by the implosion of Japan's economic bubble, the fact that they were so widespread marks a clear political setback for the Ministry of Finance's authority. Just as the collapse of the real estate and securities markets heralds the end of the decade, it also indicates that Japan has come about as far as it can with its present economic and political structures. ■

Takeshi Sasaki is professor of political science at the Faculty of Law, the University of Tokyo.