

# Political Restructuring

By Susumu Takahashi

Articles in the Japanese media covered a wide range of subjects in late 1992 and early 1993 with the United Nations being at the center. The U.N. Security Council decided to send a U.S.-dominated multinational force to war- and hunger-racked Somalia as part of what was dubbed "Operation Restore Hope." Having humanitarian objectives and billed as a "humanitarian intervention," Operation Restore Hope marks a departure from the traditional format for U.N. peacekeeping operations.

With this in mind, Japan was abuzz with talk about U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and his pamphlet "An Agenda for Peace" written in June 1992. Seeking to make peacekeeping operations more flexible, Secretary General Boutros-Ghali is calling for reforming the U.N.'s organizational structures, has proposed creating standing financial, personnel and equipment pools, and sending such forces even when the principals' consent has not been obtained, and has suggested creating peace enforcement units that would differ from the standard peacekeeping operations in that they would use force to obtain compliance with a ceasefire. This has drawn a great deal of attention in Japan because peacekeeping operations and the possibility of amending the Japanese Constitution have been prominent issues since the beginning of this year.

Although we have yet to see a full-fledged debate on these subjects, Yoshikazu Sakamoto kicked things off with an article entitled "People-first U.N. Reforms" in the January *Sekai* in which he wrote of Japan's evolution and what should be done to reform the U.N. Sakamoto is calling for a U.N. that is people-friendly rather than big-power-friendly. Specifically, he advocates the creation of "democratic security structures that do not depend upon great-power hegemonism." According to Sakamoto, there are three prerequisites for such security structures: progress in global disarmament backed by advances in nuclear disarmament;

the strengthening and enhancement of United Nations police forces; and recognition that the rule of law, premised upon respect for human rights, must prevail. He goes on to say that U.N. restructuring should enhance the global protection of human rights and that enabling the people to take part in U.N. reforms is essential to democratize that body. Referring to Secretary General Boutros-Ghali's proposed "preventive diplomacy," Sakamoto writes that we need to go beyond preventive diplomacy and achieve conflict prevention by reforming the structures that might incite conflict.

Sakamoto argues that to do this the conception of the present system in which countries put their own armed forces at the U.N.'s disposal must be broadened, and an independent U.N. military force that would be charged with preventing conflict must be created. His suggestion is not a strained response to the special circumstances that make it difficult to provide Japanese forces, but is the kind of peace-making force that must be the core of U.N. operations if the U.N. wants to put its priority on conflict prevention.

## Dangerous triangle

Much of the commentary on the new Clinton administration focused on and analyzed the generation angle. Yoshimi Ishikawa's "Neo-patriot Clinton" in the January *Voice* and Yukio Okamoto's "The Baby-boomer President's Compass" in the *This Is Yomiuri* issue of the same month were examples. A prominent theme in both articles was that Japan and the United States are and have to be equal partners. Yukio Sato, Director General of the Foreign Ministry's North American Affairs Bureau, stated in "The Kind of Approach Wanted From Japan" (in the January *Gaiko Forum*) that Clinton's inauguration offers an ideal opportunity to develop a new cooperative relationship based upon an equal partnership between Japan and the United States. Arguing that the two countries must cooperate to pursue their shared agenda, he emphasized

the importance of Japanese initiatives in acting from a different (i.e., non-American) perspective to do things that the United States might not think of.

While there is nothing to worry about as long as these initiatives are sound, there are increasingly loud calls in Japan to emphasize Asia, and there is a growing concern that these initiatives might be anti-American and pro-Asian. For example, "The Case Against Willy-nilly Asianism" in the January *Sentaku* (no author given) looks at the recent emphasis on Asia and concludes that this is not an inherent attraction to Asian themes but rather a rejection of the United States and Europe. Likewise, Yoichi Funabashi's "The U.S.-Japan-China Triangle" in the January *Foresight* analyzes the way the U.S., Japan, and China see each other and says that this could easily escalate into a dangerous game of shifting alliances; with a China determined to maintain an authoritarian and closed political system, a Japan where the policy decision making process is wrapped in enigma, and a United States that has traditionally formulated its Asia policy in terms of playing China and Japan off against each other.

## New challenges on the Japanese political scene

Looking to domestic Japanese politics, the focus on political reform quickly shifted to political restructuring with the mid-December split in the Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) Takeshita faction, Makoto Tanabe's resignation as chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ), and other fast-breaking developments. Many political figures made magazine appearances during this period, including Ichiro Ozawa ("Why We Are Pushing for Reform" in the December *Bungei Shunju*), Keizo Obuchi ("To Ichiro Ozawa—Yesterday's Comrade" in the January *Bungei Shunju*), Morihiro Hosokawa ("Under the 'Reform' Banner" in the January *Bungei Shunju*), and Satsuki Eda ("My Sirius Declaration" in





U.S. troops land in Somalia in early December to carry out "Operation Restore Hope."

the January *Sekai*). In the exchange between Ozawa and Obuchi, Ozawa (who left the Takeshita faction) called the faction's split a dispute between the old guard and reformers, but Obuchi (who heads the group that stayed) retorted that the split was about means not ends and that his group is not the "old guard" but the conservative mainstream. Seen as holding the key to a broad political restructuring, including the opposition SDPJ, Eda announced the formation of the Sirius policy caucus.

One of the main issues facing a realignment of the left is the constitutional status of the Self-Defense Forces. While some LDP leaders call for amending the constitution so the SDF can play a more active role in U.N. peacekeeping operations, Eda says that rather than amending the constitution, a new basic law should be enacted to answer any questions under the present constitution. Once this is done efforts should be made to fit this into a constitutional framework. He suggests that the SDF could be deemed constitutional so long as its organization and purpose are purely defensive and that a basic security law be enacted to provide quasi-constitutional legal authority for the SDF. Eda also says that the current distrust of politics is not just directed at the LDP but also

at the perennial opposition parties which have let the LDP get away with so much for so long. The prime imperative is for creating a political counterforce able to take the reins of government.

## Recession and restructuring

Along with political reform, much discussion has been devoted to the recession—referred to as the Heisei recession—and what it means. Interestingly, many economists have gone on record as saying that political and administrative reforms are a prerequisite to beating the recession. Kimindo Kusaka, for example, wrote in "Over-anxiety and Over-confidence" (in the February *Bungei Shunju*) that the current recession in some ways represents a lull after the hectic bubble years.

While this might be effective in curing the bubble mentality, there are some aspects of the current recession that cannot be explained in cyclical economic terms. The flight of international investment capital from Japan, for example, he attributes to Japan's losing the international community's trust, which can only be reversed by reforming the Japanese system.

Fiscal analyst Hiroshi Miyajima has looked at the government's draft budget for fiscal 1993 and written in "The Third

Post-bubble Budget" (January 19 *Ekonomisuto*) that the real need is for political reform. Miyajima criticizes the myopic attitudes that characterize the budget drafting process and calls for medium- and long-term structural reforms. Included in his proposals is a thorough review of the fiscal relationship between the national and local governments, administrative deregulation to promote decentralization of authority, and basically delegating fiscal responsibility to local governments.

Around the same time the private-sector Committee for the Promotion of Political Reforms released a report in late January entitled "The Delegation Revolution" calling, *inter alia*, for the enactment of a basic law on decentralization and a reform of prefectural tax policy to make the consumption tax an European Community-style value-added tax.

Change seems to be the current buzzword in Japan, but the question is who will change things and how. Greater realism will clearly be needed if the various groups calling for change are to take the initiative and to formulate clear goals for the future.

*Susumu Takahashi is professor at the University of Tokyo's Division of Law and Politics, Graduate School.*