

# Post-Cold War Asia-Pacific Security

By Kiichi Saeki

Although the Cold War ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the contours of the new world order remain opaque and the present phase of transitional stability and uncertainty looks likely to continue. It probably is no exaggeration to say that we are now living in an age that is more confused, more unpredictable, and more pregnant with danger than any other period in modern history.

The kind of dramatic changes that took place in Europe due to the termination of the Cold War have not occurred in the Asia-Pacific region. One-party Communist regimes continue to reign in China, North Korea and Vietnam. Steps toward unification of the Korean Peninsula are stalled and prospects for reforming the system in North Korea without major chaos look extremely scant indeed. Suspicions about nuclear development in North Korea not only hinder the development of North-South dialogue and moves toward unification, but also pose a serious obstacle to the security of the Asia-Pacific region as a whole.

China has two states in practice, yet the conditions for recognizing this fact internationally and legally do not exist. Both China and Taiwan proclaim that there is only one China, and both the United States and Japan have pledged respect for this view. The territorial problem between Japan and Russia does not look like it will be resolved in the near future. For a while the Indochinese Peninsula appeared to be making steady progress toward eradicating the legacies of the Cold War, but inherent problems in Cambodia are making the finishing touches extremely difficult.

In Southeast Asia steady progress took place during the Cold War toward the establishment of an international system centered on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the possibility of military action between ASEAN countries today has almost vanished. Yet, besides ASEAN no other system of international security has emerged.

In East Asia the economies of many countries (Japan, the newly industrializing economies—Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan—the ASEAN countries and China) have achieved rapid growth, albeit rather lopsided. The East Asian region

appears likely to continue on the road to relative political stability and high economic growth. However, any mistake in responding to changes in either the domestic and international balance brought about by this economic growth could give rise to political instability.

As a natural course, industrialization will render the continuation of authoritarian governments unfeasible, while changes in the international balance of power will require a realignment of international relations. In addition, economic development enhances the possibility of military expansion. Even though the threat of military conflict in the Asia-Pacific region has declined, factors contributing to instability in the international balance of power in this area appear to be increasing.

## China's expanding role

The end of the Cold War brought about a decline in China's global strategic position, but in the Asia-Pacific region China's influence appears to be expanding in direct proportion to the decrease in U.S. and Russian military presence. Anxiety is increasing that arms imports from Russia will further boost this trend. Moreover, the fear that China, India, and Japan will try to fill the military power vacuum appears to have fueled the recent conspicuous military buildup by East Asian nations. It also should be noted that the relationship between Japan and Russia contains certain geopolitical factors which could easily provoke tension, a situation which does not exist in Russia's ties with Europe and the United States.

Therefore, developments in China and relations with China take on a special importance from the point of view of Asia-Pacific regional security. First of all, there is a possibility that tensions over China could arise between the United States and Japan. Since the end of the Cold War has eliminated the need for the United States to play the China card against the Soviet Union, Washington most certainly will become more strict in its attitude toward China. Therefore tension could emerge between the United States, which places more emphasis on respect for human rights and democratic reform than economic development, and



International Institute for  
Global Peace Chairman,  
Kiichi Saeki

Japan, which sees economic development as a prerequisite for respect for human rights and political democracy.

Furthermore, China is beset with many uncertain factors. China's economic growth rate in 1992 was 12% and the target for the 1990s is between 8% and 9%, but it is by no means certain that this high rate of growth can be maintained. The danger that China will fracture and enter a period of confusion following Deng Xiaoping cannot be ignored. Also, there is no guarantee that the Communist Party of China will continue on the road toward gradual reform and establishment of a market economy.

In addition, there is the possibility that China, backed by its huge population and extensive land area, will try to exert an international influence exceeding its actual strength. The nationalist ideological bent among the Chinese leadership also gives cause for concern. China's establishment of territorial waters legislation, its emphasis on the defense of its interests at sea, taken together with naval and air force expansion and military actions over the Spratly Islands have spread alarm in Vietnam and throughout the ASEAN countries.

## Essential U.S. presence

The basic security framework in the Asia-Pacific region until now has been centered on bilateral security agreements with the United States, in particular the alliance between Japan and the United States based on the U.S.-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security. It can be said that these arrangements have made cooperation between Japan and South Korea possible, prevented an armed annexation of Taiwan by China, and ensured the existence and development of the ASEAN countries. In fact, it has been U.S. commitment and military presence in the region that have upheld the region's security and economic development.

Moved by such factors as the elimination of the Soviet threat, the emergence of Japan, formerly an economically powerful ally, as a



competitor, and the changing of the guard in Washington, the United States has become more inward-looking with the result that its commitment to the security of the Asia-Pacific region and its military presence there could decline.

To avoid this situation, Japan and other Asian countries should increase efforts to undertake a fair share of the responsibilities and burdens with the United States. Japan, whose gross national product is now more than 60% that of the United States, must revise the gross imbalance that exists in the military sphere of Japan-U.S. ties. Furthermore, in principle Japan should allow itself to dispatch Self-Defense Forces overseas to participate in U.N. military operations aimed at maintaining and restoring peace. Isn't this the minimum international contribution that Japan should make to fulfill its role as a member of the international community and to maintain the health of the Japan-U.S. alliance? In addition, Japan should consider ways of providing financial, host-nation and logistic support for U.S. forward deployment strategy, and it should endeavor to modernize its own mili-

tary hardware within the scope of exclusive defense and without upsetting the balance of power.

It will be necessary to make up for the decline in the U.S. commitment and military presence by building a regional international security system based on a multilateral agreement. Such an organization, however, should function not merely as a substitute for a reduced U.S. military presence but also serve as a framework for regional security in the near future. It must be recognized that the conditions for the creation of an Asian version of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe simply do not exist in the Asia-Pacific region. Consequently, instead of an international security system covering the whole of the Asia-Pacific region, we should consider the possibility of subregional confidence-building systems limited, for example, to the Korean Peninsula, the Indochinese Peninsula or the Spratly Islands. Perhaps a forum should be established, embracing China, North Korea, Russia and Vietnam, to promote dialogue and the exchange of information concerning the security of the whole region.

To avoid the occurrence of pointless military competition among certain regional powers that might emerge to fill the vacuum created by the decline of the United States and ex-Soviet Union's military presence, we should seek to establish a very loose security forum. Toward this end, it will be necessary to provide opportunities to discuss security issues by expanding the scope of such forums as ASEAN's expanded foreign ministers' meeting and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference.

Furthermore, in promoting cooperation for security in the Asia-Pacific region, Japan should pay proper consideration to the sentiments of other Asian nations, which harbor bad images of and anxieties toward Japan. Japan should adopt a humble attitude in the face of the lessons of history, and maintain a posture of keeping its military to the minimum required for self-defense.

*Kiichi Saeki has been deputy chairman of the International Institute for Global Peace since 1988. He served as an advisor at the Nomura Research Institute until 1990.*

#### (Fisheries— cont'd from page 20)

increasing recently. Meanwhile, new methods such as live fish distribution and fishermen cooperative direct delivery has emerged reflecting consumers' preference for fresher and higher grade fish. Speciality retailers, which formerly accounted for more than 60% of total fresh fish sales in value terms, have decreased by 13,000 over the past 10 years to 40,000. At the same time, volume retailers like supermarkets (excluding department stores and large shops with more than 50 employees) have increased their market share to 60% as they meet consumer needs for a simpler lifestyle through one-stop shopping. Recently distribution costs have increased because of smaller and more varied shipments and more frequent deliveries to match consumer needs. This has put pressure on the profitability of fishing and marine processing businesses.

### Filling the demand/ supply gap

Recently, marine product imports have increased to make up for limited domestic production in the midst of strong and diver-

sifying demand. The latter reflects not only the traditional fish-based diet, but also growing health concerns which are manifested in the demand for diversified and high-value foods.

In 1991 marine product imports reached 2.85 million tons (4.32 million tons in terms of raw material). This amounted to nearly half the domestic production and in value terms was one-fourth of the world marine product trade, making Japan the world's biggest marine product importer. The main imports were 300,000 tons of shrimp, 258,000 tons of tuna, 205,000 tons of cod, 153,000 tons of salmon, 115,000 tons of crab, 113,000 tons of octopus and 282,000 tons of fish powder. Among major marine products, imports make up more than half of the total supply of clam, shrimp, octopus, crabs, flatfish and eel.

To meet the persistent needs of the population and secure a stable supply, considering the declining domestic catch, imports will become increasingly vital. Considering the exploding world population, especially in the Third World, and the optimum level of marine exploitation worldwide it is important for Japan to establish stable domestic production and a supply system relying largely on the 200 nautical mile

zone. According to government statistics for 1991 the self sufficiency ratio was 86% in volume terms and supply for domestic consumption declined 6.3% from the previous year to 12.2 million tons. This reflects a decline in domestic production due partly to international regulations. Pure food supply, which is calculated by multiplying the 8.28 million tons of gross food supply times the average yield variance of 53.8%, stood at 4.45 million tons and the annual per capita marine food supply declined 3.2% year on year to 35.9 kilogram.

Marine products are an important food based on Japan's geographical reality and a basic component for maintaining the nutritionally balanced "New Japanese Diet" (a calorie balance between protein, fat and carbohydrate at 13:29:58). Thus, the consumption of marine products continues to be strong despite the recent economic slowdown, reflecting consumer preference for healthier, tastier, higher grade and fresher food. The distribution system will respond to this trend towards a simpler dietary life.

*Tohru Morikawa, who had long worked at the Fisheries Agency, has been senior executive managing director of the Japan Fisheries Association since 1991.*