

Japan's role in a multipolar world

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The international situation is today at a major crossroad in the postwar history. President Bush of the United States stressed in his inaugural speech in January 1989 that «new winds are now blowing». This statement could prove to be the understatement of the century.

East-West relations are now beginning to undergo a dramatic transformation in which the «era of confrontation» is being replaced by an «era of dialogue». The consolidation and expansion of the scope of such a dialogue is taking place and efforts are being made even in searching for ties of positive cooperation in East-West relations.

Between the United States and the Soviet Union, the INF agreement has been concluded, and the START negotiations are in progress. In Europe, negotiations on CFE and CSBM have given rise to real hopes in the minds of many Europeans both in the East and in the West.

A new change is also visible in the normalization of relations between the Soviet Union and China. In May 1989, General Secretary Gorbachev paid a visit to China to hold a summit meeting between the Chinese and the Soviet leaders for the first time in thirty years. As a result, a new relationship between these two major powers has now set in.

These new developments in the relationship between major powers - such as those between the United States and the Soviet Union, and between China and the Soviet Union - are affecting the pattern of political alignments which have dominated the world scene for many years. The newly emerging trends towards the scaling-down and even the cessation of some of the regional conflicts can also be evaluated in the context of this change in the relationship between major powers. Thus, the Soviet Union completed her troops withdrawal from Afghanistan in February this year. In Angola and Namibia in Africa, as well as in some parts of Central America, there are signs of moves towards the resolution

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of conflicts. Furthermore, with regard to the Cambodian situation, for the first time since the outbreak of the conflict an international conference took place in Paris in August this year.

Even more significant is the development in Europe. In Hungary and Poland, at the end of painful trials and agonizing soul-searching endeavours there has emerged a dear orientation towards the introduction of parliamentary democracy and the market economy system, while in East Germany, as well, signs of dramatic changes have finally begun to surface. All of these developments can be regarded as historic in the sense that they are shaking the kind of international order that has moulded the postwar world at its very foundation. There is now a growing hope that the basic political map of Europe, where the division of Europe has been a basic premise of the regional order since the Second World War, might at last be modified.

When the last war ended, the United States emerged unscathed as the predominant power of the international system. In the political domain, although the world came to be divided as a result of the start of the cold war, the place of the United States as the leader of the free world was accepted without challenge. In the economic domain, the postwar system of economic management centring around the Breton Woods institutions was predominantly an American creation based on the principle of free trade for all as its essential ideal to pursue. What is probably even more important, in the moral domain as well, the leadership of the United States based on her idealism was dominant as the unifying element in these political and economic fabrics, as exemplified typically in such initiatives as the Marshall Plan for Europe. These US initiatives were decisive in shaping the framework of the international system in which the countries of the West were allowed not only to recover from the economic destruction of the war but also to embark upon a course for political as well as economic reemergence as major players of the postwar system.

The situation was no different with regard to Asia and the Pacific. Japan, prostrate with the destruction of the war, could start on the road to economic rehabilitation and national reconstruction only under the protective arms of the United States. Japan, which renounced the option to be a military power, could enjoy the benefits of the international political and economic system established under the aegis of the United States only through close politico-security as well as economic ties with the United States.

In the intervening forty odd years since then, both Western Europe and Japan have not only succeeded in surviving but also in achieving a great economic prosperity and a political

stability. In effect what we are witnessing now is not so much the phenomenon of the «decline of the United States» as the reemergence of Western Europe and Japan as major players on a par with the United States in this system. Nevertheless an essential point to remember is the fact that this new reality requires us to modify the way we manage the system, so that we can adapt to this new situation of shift in the power relationship.

The second factor which is contributing to this structural transformation is the growing irrelevance of the state of cold war. We have been so accustomed to the habit of thinking in terms of East-West confrontation as part of the reality for so many years that it is not easy to think about the implications of the eventual total disappearance of the cold war confrontation. However, the most important point about the disappearance of the cold war would probably be that the significance of the military factor in the management of the international system will diminish greatly in importance, as the perception of the threat to security will change in its content.

It should be added in passing that even without this new development, there has been growing new reality that military strength is losing its importance as the decisive factor in ensuring the security of a nation. The realization that the nuclear weapon is «the ultimate weapon of total annihilation» which cannot be used for practical purposes has led, somewhat paradoxically, to the relative decline of its importance as guarantee for the stability of the system. Total prohibition of the use of force as enshrined in Article 2 paragraph 4 of the United Nations Charter has had very much the same effect on a more conventional level, as the nationalisation of the Suez Canal by President Nasser of Egypt in 1956 and the inability of the United Kingdom and France to cope with this situation by force so dramatically demonstrated. What seriously threatens the international system of today, more often than not, is not so much the military threat of one or another power challenging the system, as threats coming from different quarters, such as the threat of the collapse in economic management, the threat of international terrorism, the threat of social unrest in one's own country and so forth.

Nevertheless, it has remained undeniable that in the final analysis, it is the military element which is kept in reserve as the last resort that functions as the most effective deterrent against many types of threat affecting the security of a nation. Against this stark reality, the new prospect of disappearance of the cold war will certainly have the effect of dramatically affecting the strategic thinking of the nations involved so that the international system that we have been living in for the last half a century will have to be readjusted to this new development.

There is one more important facet to this new development. It is that the termination of the cold war will come primarily as a result of the failure of the socio-economic systems in the countries of the East. For many years, the Soviet leadership was paramount in that part of the world, parallel with the leadership of the United States in the West, but there was a decisive contrast in the leadership role of the two superpowers. Whereas the American leadership was based on her total supremacy in military, political and economic authority, backed by her idealism which offered the basis for voluntary cooperation within the West, the Soviet leadership in this region has been based almost exclusively on her physical strength as the military superpower. Thus, what we are witnessing in the Eastern bloc not only signifies the failure of the Soviet model as the national system of socio-economic management, but also confirms the point that military strength is not even an adequate guarantee for ensuring the stability of a system, except against an external aggression.

The third factor which is responsible for the structural transformation of the international system is the emergence of global issues, or issues which affect us all, irrespective of our respective political and social conditions or geopolitical situations and which require our joint cooperation on a global scale for their solution. The Chernobyl accident was symbolic in this sense, in that it demonstrated so conclusively to many in the West as well as in the East that under normal conditions what could be a more likely threat to come from the Soviet Union would not be the threat of a military attack but that of an accident of this type - a nuclear hazard. Furthermore, in an age in which human activities have become totally transnational across national borders so that the consequences of these activities know no national boundaries, in an age in which economic and social interdependence among nations as human beings is not an abstract intellectual notion but a fact of life that one can feel, we can no longer afford to fail to take this third factor seriously in thinking about the issue of security and stability of our international system, as the near panic on that «Black Monday» in October 1987 so dramatically demonstrated. It is for this reason that we have to recognise this emergence of global issues - such as the preservation of the environment, the prevention of lethal diseases like AIDS and the control of drugs, as well as the harmonious coordination of macro-economic policy management for avoiding major economic havoc - as an essential factor for ensuring the proper functioning of our international political and economic system.

In a nutshell, what we are witnessing is a gradual but unequivocal transformation in our system towards a new world in which a hackneyed simplistic dichotomy between the East

and the West or between the North and the South will be progressively losing its relevance to the solution of many issues that will confront us.

Our Response to the Challenge

It is clear that this process of structural transformation in the international system now poses an enormous challenge to us. Against the background of the various factors which have brought about this transformation, what should be the responses on our part, particularly on the part of the industrialized democracies of the West, which include my own country?

Here, I wish to confine myself to mentioning a few elements which I regard to be of particular importance from a specifically non-European perspective of Japan.

First, the obvious starting point is the recognition that we no longer live in what is described as *pax americana*. At a time when the maintenance of order under *pax americana* was the rule of the game, the order in the system was maintained primarily through the leadership of the United States. In such a situation, in both the political and the economic domains, the United States tended to practice what might be termed as «unilateral globalism». The United States was in effect managing the international system through maintaining a universally acceptable order through unilateral leadership. With the arrival of diffusion of power, however, this is no longer possible. We have to establish a new system which will ensure order and stability through different means which reflect the new reality. What might be termed by contrast as «global unilateralism», in which the United States sometimes seems tempted to exert order of her own conception on a multilateral basis, cannot offer a viable solution. The emergence of multipolarity in power relationship of this new world and of the diversity in policy perspectives based on pluralistic value judgements and diversified interests among nations does not allow us to proceed to this «global unilateralism», i.e. a tendency to practice a unilaterally determined policy not based on universal acceptance on a global basis. The only viable alternative would be what might be termed as *pax consortis*, i.e. the maintenance of order through a mechanism of management based on consultation among the major players in the system.

However, we have constantly to keep in mind that this system of maintaining peace and stability through consultation will be a very fragile system which could lead us nowhere in

the end, unless the participants of this system could share the idea of a common goal to be pursued and have the willingness to cooperate positively for the attainment of this shared goal.

An attempt to maintain peace and stability through a mechanism of consultation becomes particularly difficult when one considers an added fact that we no longer live in a world of zero-sum game. Indeed, the degree of interdependence which has come about in the world today both in our economic and political relations means that there is a danger that we might end up by playing a negative sum game. One distinct characteristic of this new environment is that no single participant is strong enough to make the system function properly, while each single participant is strong enough to sabotage the system simply by not cooperating. In this sense it is a highly fragile system, which requires a constant nurturing and strengthening through positive cooperation based on consultation.

Faced with this new reality, it should be clear to everyone that Japan cannot and should not be a mere observer to this process. Nor can she be allowed to be a passive participant. As a country which has by now grown into the status of a major partner in this new system, positive cooperation by Japan, commensurate with the impact she has come to have upon the political and economic process of the world, is essential for a proper functioning of the system. This point was recognized already in 1978 in the economic context, when the economic summit process started at Rambouillet. I believe, however, that this approach has yet to be fully expanded into the political sphere as well. What happened in Guadeloupe in 1978 should not be repeated again by Europe and the United States.

For Japan, on the other hand, there is an urgent need to raise her consciousness towards the importance of concrete cooperation on her part as a truly global partner in a more positive fashion. It is no longer possible for Japan to sit idly in a back bench of this system and to react passively to whatever emerges, like a negligible new comer to a club. Japan should be made more conscious of her place in the system and her global responsibility for maintaining and strengthening the system in a manner commensurate with her status, which by now is no longer purely economic.

In order for this to be a reality, it will be important to develop a framework for cooperation or even a concrete mechanism in which Japan is constantly involved for consultation on a multilateral basis.

This brings me to the second element I wish to raise in relation to how we cope with some of the major changes that are now taking place.

There is no doubt whatsoever that what is happening in the Soviet Union and more especially in Eastern Europe is historic in its significance. However, precisely because of the enormous implications of what is happening in that part of the world upon our future and upon the international system, we have to be completely sober in our analysis and assessment of what is taking place and where these radical developments are going to lead.

I believe we are agreed that the «waves of reform» both in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe are to be considered a major opportunity to the West for the transformation of East-West relations. We are also agreed that these reforms are welcome, to the extent that they will lead to an integration of their economic systems into our system through adoption of a market-oriented economic model and to a closer assimilation of their social systems to those of our Western democracies through introduction of democratic political institutions and respect for human values. By contrast, needless to say, the domestic reform of these countries *per se*, irrespective of its policy orientation, is not the goal that we pursue to see in these countries. The policy perspectives on our part should rather be directed towards seeing to it that the reforms will lead to a more democratic system of the body politic in these countries, which in turn will lead to a more stable international environment in which the countries of this group will be able to cooperate with us as responsible partners of the system, with a pattern of behaviour that conforms to the accepted codes of conduct of the system.

If this is our premise, I believe that our policy to these countries should be examined on an individual basis through a differentiated approach, to see whether the policy goals and orientations pursued by this or that individual country are truly going in line with our own policy perspectives. This, I submit, will require a very dose process of consultation among our partners of the Western democracies, because the case of each country will be different in its approach to the reform, its prescription for the reform, and even in its ultimate aim for the reform.

On the basis of such dose consultation on, and coordination of, our respective approaches, Japan should and will certainly cooperate with other Western partners in achieving our policy goals in this area. In fact, with respect to the situation in Poland and Hungary, Japan is already on the point of embarking upon concrete measures of cooperation to be extended to these countries to help reform their economies. The agreement reached at the Arche Summit last July on this issue is a testimony to our commonly accepted determination in this direction. I do hope strongly that before long Japan will be able to come up with concrete proposals in line with our common policy to these countries.

As for the Soviet Union, on the other hand, one is struck by the fact that there would seem to be a certain degree of incongruity in the external posture of the Soviet Union in different regions of the world.

Thus, in Europe, the Soviet Union has been put on the defensive in maintaining the existing order based on the Yalta agreement and on the CSCE process. For this purpose, she is developing a set of flexible diplomatic policies in her own way. In Asia, by contrast, the Soviet Union has yet to come up with a more significant change in her policy stance towards this region. In this part of the world, the basic policy objective of the Soviet Union has been to try to expand her sphere of politico-military influence in an attempt to gain a position which would be on a par with the United States in a regional balance as a truly global superpower. With this aim in mind, the Soviet Union has been trying to develop political and economic relations with many countries of the region. There appears little evidence so far for a noticeable change in this policy stance of the Soviet Union. Unlike what is happening in Europe, the Soviet Union has not yet embarked upon noticeable policy initiatives in the same direction as she has in Europe, except for launching a peace offensive designed to win the favour of the countries in the region by words. It is true that there have been some recent moves in Soviet policy worthy of note, such as those for Cambodia and for Afghanistan. However, it is too early to judge whether these are something more than a tactical rearrangement, going into a more fundamental shift in her position.

If we turn our attention more specifically to the Soviet policy towards Japan, we can discern, at least so far, no visible change in the policy stance of the Soviet Union in this regard, although there are signs which suggest that the Soviet Union may be getting more seriously interested in improving relations with Japan. The long-standing dispute over the issue of the Northern Territories remains so far untouched by the Soviet side, in spite of the fact that this is an issue which has its origin in the Soviet «expansionism» of the Stalinist era. There has so far been no significant sign of change in the Soviet military posture in the Pacific, where the Soviet Union has been reinforcing its naval and other military strength in an attempt to aim for parity with the United States in the strategic balance of the region in the Pacific.

Thus, it would be fair to say that a substantive change in Soviet policy in the Asia-Pacific basin remains yet to be seen. This point is important in my view, because what the Soviet Union is going to do in this part of the world, together with what she is doing in Europe, will offer a key to pass a conclusive judgement on whether the policy orientation of the

Soviet diplomacy as a whole in a global sense has changed or is going to change in the near future.

The third point I wish to touch upon in looking at the whole issue of the new development in East-West relations is the implication of these new developments to the issue of security.

It is certainly commonplace to say that «security is indivisible». This was a position confirmed at the Williamsburg Summit in 1983, when the security implications of the Soviet deployment of SS-20s were very hotly debated. The happy outcome of this issue, resulting in the adoption of the global double zero option and the total elimination of SS-20s in Europe and in Asia has demonstrated the validity of this position. The point I wish to emphasize here is that the validity of this position is in no way diminished in the present circumstances.

In examining the security aspects of what is happening in the Eastern bloc and of what our joint policies are going to be, we have to keep in our scope not only their implications upon the narrow territorial confines of Eastern and Western Europe, but more broadly upon other parts of the outer world, particularly in the region of the Pacific in which Japan is situated and in which the US-Soviet relations have a different dimension than in the European context.

There are important differences between the West European theatre and the East Asian theatre from the viewpoint of security considerations. One essential difference is the basic character and modality of alignment that prevails in the two regions. On the European scene, the clear demarcation line between the opposing camps based on the continuous boundaries running through the central part of Europe has been established. The bipolarisation of security interests in the form of NATO-Warsaw Pact confrontation has created a situation where an increased tension can always involve a danger of escalation which could develop into a large scale military conflict involving the two opposing groups. Thus the CFE and the CSCE processes make sense. By contrast, the East Asian scene is characterized by the fact that such a clear demarcation line between the two opposing groups facing each other in confrontation has hardly been a reality, except for the situation on the Korean Peninsula. A number of countries that exist in this region cannot be categorically classified simply as allies or adversaries of the United States. These countries are friends of the United States in a basic sense, sharing a number of common orientations, values and systems, such as political, economic and social, and are anxious to promote their

stability and prosperity on the basis of cooperative relations with the countries of the industrialized democracies of the West. Nevertheless, many of them are not in an alliance relationship with the United States or other Western countries, and thus are intrinsically more susceptible to influences coming from countries with different orientations.

In addition, the East Asian security environment, as distinct from the European environment, is characterized by the tripolar geopolitical structure created by the interplay of the United States, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. Although China at present can hardly be described as a major military power, her role as a major actor in a politico-strategic context of East Asia is already significant. This is why what happened in Tian-an-Men Square last June can have much more complex implications than are realized in Western Europe.

These characteristics of East Asia affect the nature of the security problems of this region. On the one hand, the lack of an established line which determines the respective sphere of domination of the two camps makes the entire region highly unstable to the extent that the politico-military geography of the region has often been susceptible to modification by force without risking a large scale war between the two major blocs.

On the other hand, the same fluidity of the region where an ephemeral balance of power can be affected so easily by events taking place within the region or in the peripheral areas, makes the region extremely sensitive and vulnerable to factors which are not strictly military. What can very often be determinative of the balance in the region will not be necessarily the kind of military tension and outbreak of armed conflict as could be the case with the European front. Very often, it may well be the political impact of the occurrence of an event or of the emergence of a new situation that will bring about a new drift in the security balance.

Given this dual vulnerability that exists in the East Asian region, it will be easy to see that the nature and significance of factors which affect the security of this region are not the same as they are in relation to Europe. Such factors have to be examined within the framework of these basic characteristics of the region. It is for this reason that, for example, simple comparison of Soviet military strength with those of others in this region will be almost meaningless as a basis for a similar attempt for arms reduction negotiations in a form parallel to the European pattern, based on arithmetic «beancounting» of total numbers of troops, aircraft and warships.

Roles of Japan in the Security Context

I wish to conclude my brief presentation by touching upon what roles Japan should be playing in relation to this issue of global security.

It is generally recognized that the security problem is a purely military problem only *in extremis*. Before reaching this ultimate stage, however, there are conceivable different steps of crisis situation - different not only in degree but also in kind. Given the changing nature of the security environment in the newly emerging setting of East-West relations, and given the characteristics of the security problems which can arise in this new situation, it seems particularly important to give due attention to such non-military aspects of security as the internal stability, social resilience, economic prosperity, political confidence born out of credible policy by outsiders and so forth. All these non-military factors are part and parcel of the security in many parts of the world, and notably in an East Asian setting of the present day. It is in this broader setting that the question of what should be the expected role of Japan in contributing to the maintenance of security in a global context has to be considered.

There is a growing concern, outside Japan, that Japan which has grown into a major world economic power has not been playing a more responsible role commensurate with her economic power. In fact, this argument surfaces in various areas and in different contexts. In the area of defense, the argument has often taken the form of a criticism that Japan's contribution in defense has been insufficient; that Japan has been a free rider that has been relying upon the shoulder of the United States without sharing the burden, while enjoying an enormous economic prosperity; that in a word Japan should do more, much more for her military build-up. While the basic theme that Japan should accept a greater share of responsibility in the world today commensurate with her economic power can be legitimate, its indiscriminate application to concrete cases can be less than constructive. It is submitted that the problem is not so much the simplistic point of *whether* Japan should do more, as a more difficult question of *what* Japan should do and *how* she should do it. This question in the final analysis would involve the whole question of what Japan's orientation should be in the present-day world.

No one will dispute that the security of Japan is inseparably linked with the security of East Asia. If only on that narrow ground, Japan has a direct shared interest and responsibility for the maintenance of peace and stability of that region. A first critical area for Japan's role is how best she can contribute to this task.

In the context of East Asian setting, given the basic nature of the security environment of East Asia as I have described, and given also the past legacies of Japan stemming from her activities of the recent past in this region, a constructive role that Japan can play in fulfilling her shared responsibility for the maintenance of security would lie in cooperating in such non-military factors of security, with a view to enhancing the peace and stability of the region. East Asia, in contrast to Western Europe, is in an evolving process for responding to the new challenges of the changing international environment. In this task of enhancing security in the non-military field, Japan can and should play a much more positive and constructive role. Japan, with a political determination and intensified conscious efforts which are still much needed, will be able to become a major constructive force for the establishment of stability in the area and thus make a significant contribution to security in the global context as well.