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PACIFIC BASIN COOPERATION CONCEPT AND JAPAN'S OPTIONS

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A final report on the Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept was submitted to the late prime minister Masayoshi Ohira on May 19 by its Study Group which had worked 14 months to prepare it. Ironically this was three days after a nonconfidence motion against the premier was passed by the House of Representatives. On receiving the final report the prime minister said half in jest: "This report drawn up by your Study Group members may be the only fine thing my administration will leave for the future." And now that the prime minister has passed away so suddenly from a heart attack, the statement sounds like his last "will." The late prime minister staked much on the concept.

It is true that the late prime minister placed great hopes on the concept which he came out with soon after the inauguration of his administration. He appointed Saburo Okita, who had headed the Study Group, as foreign minister in his second cabinet. The nomination of Okita who was a nondietman was quite unusual, which in turn indicated the importance premier Ohira gave to the concept. As a matter of fact, his foreign policy slogan of "Pacific Basin Cooperation," which is both old and new, had already drawn various reactions from the countries in the Asia-Pacific region even before an interim report on the concept was made public by the Study Group last November. Then when prime minister Ohira and foreign minister Okita made a goodwill tour of Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea in January, they displayed positive attitudes regarding the concept in replying to questions raised by the leaders of the countries interested in the plan. Consequently, an agreement was reached on holding an international seminar to discuss the concept at the Australia National University in Canberra this September. But, frankly speaking, since the report by the Study Group in Tokyo was incomplete and various problems to be taken up by the seminar, such as membership, remained unresolved, this writer, who was one of

the members of the Study Group, was surprised that the image of the concept was spreading so quickly in advance of its substance.

Prime Minister Zenko Suzuki who succeeded Ohira is generally expected to faithfully follow his predecessor's foreign policy. This should be true especially for the Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept which has already spread across the entire Asia-Pacific region and has stirred so great interest as well as concern. From the standpoint of continuity of foreign policy, the new administration must not take any irresponsible action in relation to this concept which was proposed as a task of the nation's foreign policy, and even more important it should not come up with an entirely different concept.

When the concept was first proposed soon after the inauguration of the Ohira administration, there were suspicions that it was being presented as only a new slogan to replace the "omnidirectional foreign policy" slogan of the preceding Fukuda government. Incidentally, some enthusiastic journalists and business consultants were trying at that time to promote the idea of a "Pacific Century," making use of a "China boom" which had been created in the country after Japan and China entered a new relationship following the signing of a long-term trade agreement (June 1978) and eventually a peace and friendship treaty (August 1978). It was also true that these people highly evaluated China's Four Modernization Program without any reserve and too hopefully counted on China as a pillar of their concept. Such optimism was shattered before long when the Soviet Union began reasserting itself as a Pacific power while China vastly curtailed the scale of its original modernization program.

ASIA-PACIFIC AGE

In any case, many people now agree that the 1980s through the 90s and into the next century will be the "Asia-Pacific Age." Truly the Pacific basin region is vastly rich in potential and is composed of such advanced industrial nations as the U.S., Canada and Japan as well as the so-called newly industrializing countries like South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Mexico. The attempts by Australia and New Zealand to attain an identity as an "Asian state" have great historical significance. The ASEAN countries, meanwhile, are working toward integration through the common tasks of industrialization and solidifying their own nations. And lastly new independent states are being created one

after another by the islanders in the South Pacific.

Seen in this way the Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept seems attractive and stimulating but at the same time many obstacles and problems exist too. The Greater Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere proposed by Japan during the Pacific War was but a nightmare to most of the Asia-Pacific countries. And the recent inclination toward formation of a Japan-U.S.-China tripartite "antihegemony" alliance, which is being called the "Eastern version of NATO," might lead to fears of this developing into an anti-Soviet alliance. The Asia Pacific region has become so complicated and diversified an area that it no longer can permit pursuit of any kind of policy by only one's interpretation.

Under such conditions, this country cannot call for Pacific Basin Cooperation rooted in its own narrow national interests.

The idea of Pacific Basin Cooperation, of course, was not a monopoly of the Ohira administration. There have been economists and business leaders in Japan who have been interested in development of a Pacific economic community while such forums as the Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC) and the Pacific Trade and Development Symposium (PTDS) have been active since their establishment in the late 1960s. As indicated by the Oil Crisis of 1973 and symbolized by the term "Spaceship Earth" first used by American scholar Kenneth E. Boulding, the earth has become ever smaller and, like it or not, all the peoples on the earth must cooperate in order to exist and live together. And the fact that the Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept has been drawing fresh attention should be positively evaluated, for this obviously indicates that a global system of interdependence is becoming extremely important to secure world peace in face of international political power struggles staged amid the heightening of international tensions of the the new cold war.

Under such circumstances, the first problem that we should consider is the fact that although all the Pacific countries today can be gathered under the term of Pacific Basin, the region is so complex in its diversity that it is rather difficult for individual countries in the region to join together.

In this connection, the report by the Pacific Basin Cooperation Study Group stresses: "Another feature of the region is its pronounced diversity. It has wide variety of countries differing in terms of stage of economic growth, ethnic composition, culture and religion. The Pacific basin is a meeting place of diverse civilizations;

it can be said that the major civilizations of the world are represented here in many variations, each with deep roots in the region. Possessing as a whole great vitality and potential together with rich diversity, the Pacific region is now on the way to becoming a regional community. This may be termed a new experiment directed toward the 21st century.”

The recognition of such diversity is indispensable. As a matter of fact, we have been approaching the Pacific region concept by carefully classifying it into three categories of local, regional and global levels. This is a basic methodological framework to understand the area without falling into error. We should fully comprehend what interacts between these three categories of levels if we want to know the true Pacific region. This axis of coordinates is what I have been emphasizing as the key to understanding the region.¹

On top of this, the final report states: “A regionalism that is open to the world, not one that is exclusive and closed, is the first characteristic of our concept. We are fully aware that a regional community without a perspective for a global community, a regionalism that excludes globalism, has no possibility of development and prosperity. Nonetheless, not a few problems that confront us today could be most suitably handled by first attempting regional cooperation and then developing this into global cooperation. Globalism without an anchor in regionalism is likely in many cases to make the resolution of problems more complex and difficult.” This is quite right and constitutes a fundamental awareness of the basic premise of the concept. It is also important that the report points out as the second feature of the concept: “From this follows the second characteristic of our concept. Not only does it have to endorse a globalist stance externally; it must aim as well for the formation internally of thoroughly free and open relations of interdependence. Be it in cultural or economic exchange, the Pacific countries should adopt fundamentally open policies.”

The Pacific region as mentioned above has rich diversity and vitality directed toward the future but when we recall that this region had been shaken by so many conflicts and rivalries as well as conquests and submissions, we must keep nurturing a wide and profound recognition of the diversity so that the Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept could never lead to the miseries and nightmares of the Pacific War.

LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE AND TASKS

We must first reconfirm here that the Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept, is a long-term vision aimed at attaining prosperity and stability in the Asia-Pacific region looking toward the 21st century. And in considering the long-term perspective, there should be an extensive reconsideration of the tasks that can be undertaken and also of various reforms that must be carried out by this country in the foreseeable future. Meanwhile those problems that cannot be resolved in the short term should be reconsidered in the light of the long-term perspective. If we should think and hope that the Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept is a cure-all that will produce immediate effects, a gap between ideal and reality will immediately appear. In this sense the concept should be considered as the "original framework" that may give direction to the nations concerned which are working toward prosperity and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. It should also constitute a "starting point" which these nations can always return to in encountering the hardships of reality. Being geared to such a long-term perspective, it is unavoidable that the concept sometimes will be criticized as too abstract or lacking in concreteness as a whole by those who expect immediate effects. We, however, have no other choice but to proceed prudently in solving today's problems one by one based on our long-range objective—Pacific Basin Cooperation.

It would be impossible to organize the Asia-Pacific countries without passing through a roundabout process. For instance, there exist in the Asia-Pacific region today areas like French New Caledonia and Tahiti which need to be given priority in their task of attaining their own political independence while there are many countries like Indonesia and the other ASEAN states whose urgent task remains achievement of their economic development and self-support. It would be an evasion of the essential of problems should such advanced nations as Japan and Australia conceive cooperation that would avoid these political issues and place emphasis only on economic matters. They could thus degrade the genuine promotion of cooperation into the selfish activities of an economic club with advanced nations as its central members.

The more we look at this reality it becomes clearer that we must concentrate our efforts on more basic issues for the time being. The final report by the Pacific Basin Cooperation Study Group says "Promoting International Exchange and Mutual Understand-

ing” are at the top of the tasks to be tackled at present. It urges expansion of various organizations and funds for cultural exchange, improvement of student-exchange systems, internationalization of educational and research institutions. And it points out in particular the urgency of eliminating the seclusiveness of Japanese universities and research institutions. The following statement in the report is very important:

“Recruitment methods, degree-granting procedures, discrepancy in the academic calendar, and instruction in foreign languages are other matters requiring improved systems and procedures to make it easier to accept foreign students in Japan. . . On the granting of degrees (especially doctorates) the practice in Japanese universities, unlike those in Britain, the United States and West Germany, is that they seldom grant degrees except in such fields as medicine and natural science. This has been a major obstacle for foreign students to study in Japan.

“Ranking alongside the important issue of student exchange is that of accepting foreign teachers and research personnel; Japanese educational and research institutions should recruit their staff members from abroad freely and in large numbers. In this regard the present practices in Japan are undeniably behind the time.

“National and public universities and research institutions in Japan have difficulty in rectifying the situation because of a rigid interpretation of the public service laws, and the need to make new legislation has been widely debated. We believe that foreign teachers and researchers should be entitled to the same status and treatment as Japanese staff members.”

PROMOTING AREA STUDIES

Although such recommendations seem quite natural, it must be said that the proposals imply revolutionary changes if we consider the long tradition of Japanese universities and research institutions. As another task in this field, the report proposes promoting area studies: “Among the socially and culturally diverse nations in the Pacific region, an extremely important role in deepening mutual understanding can be played by such area studies. Together with the development of area studies, studies on international relations and comparative studies are also necessary, focusing on the issues of the Pacific region.”

The development of such new academic fields as area studies

and international relations constitutes in itself a challenge to skeletonized established academism. But the significance of proposing promotion of these new fields of studies is very important.

Based on such a foundation, tasks like "Cooperation in Human Resources and Technology Development," "Trade Cooperation and Expansion as well as Adjustment of Industrial Structure," "Cooperation in Resources Exploitation (Energy Development, Marine Development and Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Cooperation)," "Smooth Flow of Funds (opening or liberalization of financial and capital markets)," and "Expansion and Consolidation of Transport and Communications Systems (Improvement of Transport Systems, Improvement of Communications Systems and Improvement of Immigration Systems)" can at last get under way. Seen from this viewpoint, it can be fully understood why the Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept must possess a long-term perspective.

In regard to trade cooperation and expansion, the report says: "Moreover, Japan must overcome domestic political difficulties to create a freer trade environment for such commodities as farm products, and it must also accelerate the transfer of technology abroad without fearing the so-called boomerang effect provided by newly industrializing countries." Although the argument still treats the matter in general terms, it may be a very important proposal in view of the conservative nature of this country's agricultural policy. Then in regard to the problem of resources exploitation which should draw keen attention, the report says: "As the Pacific basin countries should tackle the problems of resources like energy and food in a cooperative manner and in joint programs, they will be forced to deal with North-South issues within the region. In this regard, such factors as long lead time, colossal fund needs, and the high degree of accompanying risks must be borne in mind in such cases as resources exploitation and large-scale agricultural projects. If advanced and developing nations in the region overcome these obstacles through mutual cooperation, and if they organize effective cooperative setups among many nations for mammoth development projects, this will greatly contribute to the development of the region as a whole and will further strengthen intraregional interdependence. The promotion of such joint projects will provide the region with a framework for an effective vertical and horizontal division of labor, and be conducive to the independent development of

developing nations.”

Such a concept derives from a new international consciousness of living in an age of mutual interdependence that disallows this nation, which is a high resources-consuming country and which relies completely on overseas supply of resources, to harbor any narrow motive of exploiting the Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept only for the sake of securing resources. If this happened, it would be meaningless.

The problem after all converges into the matter of practical policies of how to materialize the proposals concerning the Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept, from the basis of a long-term perspective. Much depends on whether or not the politicians and bureaucrats of Japan will seriously carry out these proposals. It means that even this long-range vision looking toward the 21st century amounts after all, to a domestic problem, or more specifically to a question of whether or not Japan can truly move quickly from a “secluded country” into an “open country.” It would be a new test for the nation’s foreign policy to see whether such a drastic change in its internal structure can be carried out or not.

PACIFIC BASIN CONCEPT MEMBERSHIP

When the Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept was first proposed, international attention focused on its membership perhaps because many nations seemed to believe there would be an early formation of an economic cooperation organization in the region. The final report, of course, does not contain anything referring to this point. During his visit to Australia foreign minister Okita told the Kyodo News Agency on January 19 that: “The greatest difficulty of the Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept is how to constitute its membership. Its nucleus will be formed by the five advanced nations of Japan, the U.S., Canada, Australia and New Zealand plus the five ASEAN states. . . . In principle the door will be open to China and the Soviet Union too. But in actuality, China and the Soviet Union could hardly become members from the outset although China seems to have more acceptable factors.” This statement by Okita and others created speculation that the organization would be structured by the five Pacific advanced nations of the U.S., Canada, Japan, Australia and New Zealand and the five ASEAN states of Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore as core members plus South Korea and China. But this

speculation is groundless. Papua New Guinea, for instance, can be a candidate for membership while such newly industrializing countries as Taiwan and Hong Kong cannot be left out. Then membership of some Latin American countries like Mexico should be solicited too, whereas how to treat the three Indochinese countries will be a difficult matter. And since the Soviet Union has been asserting itself as a Pacific power, how to adjust the relationship with that country will be another difficult task. It is obvious that once the problem of membership is taken up a number of difficult issues such as the Sino-Soviet dispute, the question of "Two Chinas," the status of Hong Kong, the "shadow of Vietnam," the rivalry in the Southern Hemisphere between Australia and the Latin American countries and so on will surface. Any mishandling of these issues would jeopardize the Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept.

This fact also makes us face the reality that the Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept cannot help being limited at the moment to a long-term vision directed toward the next century. And while nurturing this vision, Japan and the other Pacific nations should concentrate their efforts rather on what they can do now and improve the situation as early as possible.

And in regard to specific tasks in which the cooperation is possible, the Asia-Pacific countries should continue to exert their mutual efforts to form multilayered and pluralistic organizations and networks. If these efforts turn out to be fruitful, a consensus that without such systems, peace and stability as well as prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region cannot be enhanced will be finally reached. Such a vision is needed in the extremely fluid international society of today to restrain the egoism of nationalism and collective blocs of states as well as the strategic and tactical motives of various countries sought in the name of national interests. The vision does not contain any political romanticism but, on the contrary, it is an essential program for mankind to coexist and live together. (The views expressed in this article strictly represent only those of the writer.)

¹ Mineo Nakajima: *The Options of Japan's Foreign Policy—In the Gorge Of American, Chinese and Soviet World Strategies: Chapter on "How to understand Asia—The New International Environment and Japan"*; Tokyo Keizai Shinposha, Tokyo, 1978.