

China's Political Change and New International Relations-1984.12.17

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Mineo Nakajima

Professor of International Relations
and Contemporary China Studies at the
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

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Overview:

Domestic Political Change in China and a New Pattern of
International Relations

It can be said that, as a result of the new pattern of growing worldwide tensions since late 1970s, we are now facing with the era of a "New Cold War". In this situation, the East Asian international environment has greatly changed along with China's new trend toward de-Maoization.

The period in which Mao sought his "utopia in poverty" is viewed by the Chinese masses as a dark and tragic era. No longer will they rally behind Maoist slogans. Now that the country is expanding its contacts with the outside world, its leaders realize that they must make china more affluent if they wish to retain the people's support. It seems likely, therefore, that the Deng Xiaoping-Hu Yaobang dictatorship of party bureaucrats will continue to plot the course of change in Chinese society.

Now we should not expect that the political and social conflicts inherent in China today are so great that the country is likely to go through another process of political turbulence. It seems impossible to reverse the pragmatic trend against Mao Zedong's politics, although some political conflicts and resistance against Deng Xiaoping-Hu Yaobang leadership still exist.

The most important problem in this connection now is what actual effects such internal developments will have on

Beijing's relationships with other countries, especially the Soviet Union.

Along with these fundamental political changes in China, the country is gradually turning away not only from Maoist internal policy but also from Maoist foreign policy and world strategy as well. Recent Chinese moves toward a rapprochement with the Soviet Union are one result.

After acting in concert with China in following its anti-Soviet, anti-hegemonist policy, and venturing into a tripartite alliance with the United States and China, Japan now find itself facing the problem of dealing with a China which is greatly changing its world strategy and international posture.

Along with these internal political changes, Chinese stance toward the Soviet Union has also shifted.

Even though China is now demanding that the Soviet Union stop supporting Vietnam, remove its troops from Outer Mongolia and withdraw its troops from Afghanistan, these conditions are not centered to China's crucial political interest for normalizing bilateral relations between China and the Soviet Union.

On the other hand, these three conditions effect the interests of other countries. In my assessment, the basic nature of the Sino-Soviet conflict has already changed from a question of unreconcilable territory claims on the border to a matter concerning other interested parties.

What will become of China tomorrow? After a quarter century of turbulence and faced with various difficulties

today, the country may look forward to eventually developing a unique socialist society, in particular, the recent economic reforms of this country show an overt ambitions expectation for China's economic future. But it is not so easy to achieve their goal for many reasons. What is the goal of the "four modernizations" plan? In a word, it is to increase China's per-capita gross national product from the present level of about \$250 -one-fortieth that of Japan and number 130 in world per-capita GNP standings- to \$1,000 by the end of the century. It is a modest target when one realizes that Japan's economy grew forty fold in 20 years, but given China's massive economic woes, it will be a difficult one to achieve.

Even if the "four modernizations" plans are successfully executed and the goal of \$1,000 per-capita GNP is attained, China will probably be further behind its neighbors than it is now. The surrounding countries such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore-- not to mention Japan-- already have GNPs 10 to 20 times larger than China's. That gap will probably more than double by the end of the century. For this reason, it is certain that China's economic stagnation will continue to pose a problem for mankind-- perhaps the most serious North-South issue of this century.

What then are China's options? Now that the experiment to achieve economic development with Western assistance has clearly reached its limit, the country does not have many options left. In case of the Bao Shan Mill which started in 1978 after the long-term agreement between China and Japan,

no steel has yet been produced in this factory. And many Western observers and many Japanese themselves are now thinking that China is very keen to obtain for Western economic assistance. But seen from Japan, this kind of very friendly assistance to Beijing has already reached to a limit. In the foreseeable future, we calculate about 10 billion U.S. dollars could be given to assist China with long-term credit. But this makes a limit. Besides Japan, are there any countries which can assist China much more? I don't think so.

Now the United States is making fresh relationship with China. But there is no room to assist China much more than Japan. Some in the West would like to think that China will continue to give priority to economic cooperation with Japan, the United States and other Western countries. It is more likely, however, that it will act to strengthen its relations with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, whose systems are more in tune with its own.

In this situation, Sino-Soviet reconciliation will be inevitable since they are both socialist societies, although the society of China differs in some basic respects from that of the Soviet Union. In the future, China's new leaders will underscore the need for the two countries to unite together to cope with what they call the "crisis of Socialism", as exemplified in the recent case of Poland.

U.S.-China: Reagan's Visit

Many reports have been released on the recent Sino-U.S. relationship in Japanese Newspapers. But they have not reported about the contents of President Reagan's address which was greatly expurgated on Beijing's TV and in the Peoples Daily (April 28, 1984). I would like to introduce them very briefly.

The first part of Mr. Reagan's address was a strong criticism of the Soviet Union. According to my analysis, it's very natural for the Chinese to cut this part out. But another part of his address was also expurgated. It is eight pages total in single-space typed papers, and about one-third of the remarks were cut.

The following is the most important passage which was cut.

We are people who have always believed the heritage of our past is the seed that brings forth the harvest of our future. And from our roots, we have drawn tremendous power from two great forces -- faith and freedom. America was founded by people who sought freedom to worship God, and to trust in him to guide them in their daily lives with wisdom, strength, goodness and compassion.

Our passion for freedom led to the American Revolution, the first great uprising for human rights and independence against colonial rule.

Maybe President Reagan wanted to stress this part in

Beijing. But the words "faith", "freedom" and "human rights" are not welcomed by the Chinese at present.

Japan's Policy toward China and the Soviet Union

Japanese sentiment toward the Soviet Union is now very unfavorable. Of course, it has never been particularly favorable within my memory.

However, from a dispassionate point of view, the anti-Sovietism now prevalent in Japan, though admittedly feeding on such recent actions of the Soviet Union as the invasion of Afghanistan and the construction of new military bases on Japan's Northern Islands, the KAL Incident and new deployment of the SS 20 in Asia may be an inevitable result of the foreign policy choices made by Tokyo when it decided to promote too much friendly relations with Beijing. If so, the Japanese sentiment against the Soviet Union may be viewed as a "strategic" development dictated by the current international environment. As such, it should be distinguished from the traditional anti-Soviet sentiment that has always lurked in the minds of the Japanese.

Many Japanese public opinion leaders and policy-makers have been aware of this fact and are strongly concerned about the possibility of the trend swaying and restraining Japanese foreign policy in the future. They include Premier Nakasone and Foreign Minister Abe. In this respect, Japanese diplomacy had very good lesson of the past through China's internal and external changes.

Personally, I believe it is an urgent necessity for Japan to establish a new diplomatic stand in favor of maintaining a sort of "dynamic balance" in dealing with Moscow and Beijing, a popular but far from generally accepted notion. For this purpose, Japan should work out a practical course of action vis-a-vis Moscow to bring back to a proper position the foreign policy pendulum that has swung too far in the direction of Beijing.

In doing so, Japan should first of all take into consideration the Soviet Union's anxieties about the institutional vulnerabilities of its society and about its economic future, and attempt to find ways in which the Soviet Union can be induced to become more dependent on Japan in the economic area.

In any case, as far as Moscow and Beijing is concerned, Japan will have to take a more independent foreign policy stand before long.

On this basis, it seems to me that Japan's international contribution to the Pacific region and the other part of the world through economic, cultural and other non-military forms of cooperation will become more promising.