

BOULDER CITY, NV
NEWS
V. 4, 200

#1513

JUN 26 1986

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Let's economize on economic summits

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From *Sankei Shimbun*

6493

The Tokyo Summit is over, the leaders of the seven major industrial nations have turned back to domestic politics, and now we are getting the bill for the massive, unprecedented security measures. Our obligations as host completed, it's time to ask whether the world needs these extravaganzas every year.

The twelfth summit since 1975, the May conference drew the greatest attention because of urgent issues like international terrorism, trade and exchange rate fluctuations.

The summit was an important lesson in geopolitics for Japanese. The soaring value of the yen and our huge surpluses seem remote to the average person. But the intense confrontation in Tokyo gave us a firsthand look at what it means to be a major member of the international community.

Summits have become important because they mirror increased global cooperation and interdependence. The old diplomacy based primarily on sovereign states and bilateral ties does not work any more. Yet for several reasons, I think summit meetings should be reduced to once every two years.

First, summitry gives the bureaucracies of participating countries a predominant role in planning the agenda, and exaggerated expectations encourage grandstanding by the leaders. Although President Ronald Reagan's histrionics were enjoyable, we do not need to see them every spring.

Second, this elite road show by the Big Seven has adverse consequences for the uninvited. Although summit declarations endorse

East-West dialogue and improved U.S.-Soviet relations, the meetings often exacerbate power-bloc tensions. To the rest of Asia and the Third World, summits look like a "banquet for the rich."

Third, the summiteers do not accurately reflect the West's economic and political strength. Since Canada is a member, Australia should be included as a representative of the Southern Hemisphere. Or, using foreign currency reserves as a standard, Taiwan, with the fourth largest holding after West Germany, Japan and the United States, qualifies as a "major economic power." Taiwan's \$13 billion trade surplus with the United States is another reason for sending an invitation to Taipei.

Fourth, as the recent summit showed, U.S. world strategy dominates these meetings and exaggerates their political significance. Lybia was specifically mentioned in the anti-terrorism statement because the United States raided the country in April.

In remarks just before the summit, President Reagan said improved relations with Beijing, including military cooperation, are an important component of U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union. Washington is still playing the "China Card" as a trump against Moscow. Fortunately, Reagan did not push this idea in Tokyo, but other Western countries cannot cooperate in such a misguided policy.

A final point against yearly summit gatherings is the astronomical cost to the host nation of police protection for VIPs, special media coverage and other preparations for the gala. Let's give the taxpayers a break and hold the party every other year.

Prof. Nakajima speaks for many people, especially the Foreign Ministry and taxpayers, in saying, "Enough summits!"

With the unpleasant experience of the Tokyo Summit fresh in mind—the terrorism statement Japan had to sign and the apparent failure to obtain support for a slower appreciation of the yen—there is much skepticism in Japan about the value of such fetes.

Translated from the Japanese newspaper Sankei Shimbun by The Asia Foundation's Translation Service Center.