

ION

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Japan needs new self-image

By MINEO NAKAJIMA

The major changes that occurred in international society at the beginning of the 1990s — the end of the Cold War and the downfall of socialism — have been centered on Europe and the United States and so far have bypassed Asia.

Despite the fact that the Cold War is over, military tension in the Taiwan Strait has increased. And despite the collapse of socialism, Asian-type socialist systems continue to exist in China, North Korea and the three Indochinese countries. Given this situation, a paramount task from now on is the creation of an international system in Asia that ensures the region's stability and prosperity.



In Europe the establishment of the Westphalia system in the 17th century, which brought the Thirty Years' War to an end and led to the consolidation of the European state system, set off a current of cooperation. The present moves to integrate the European Community lie within this current. In contrast, Asia has not experienced any horizontal international system in its history. It only had the so-called Chinese world order, which was vertical.

What kind of network will it be possible to build in Asia, where the groundwork for a horizontal international system is lacking? I do not think the problem involves Asia's diversity. Rather, with an outstandingly affluent country like Japan existing alongside extremely poor countries with standards of living only one-hundredth that of Japan's, the problem lies in building an order that can help to close this gap.

The notable thing about Asia is that,

despite such negative factors, the region has enormous potential for economic growth. While remembering that such political problems as those between China and Taiwan and between North and South Korea remain unsettled, Japan, the biggest economic power in the region, must give careful thought to its contribution so as to ensure the balanced development of the region as a whole.

Bill Clinton, the new president of the United States, has adopted an extremely stern attitude toward China, while China itself appears to be trying to draw Japan closer, as seen in its invitation to the Emperor to make a visit, and to woo Japan in the direction of a kind of Asianism. Japan stands between the two. But Japan's role should be more than simply that of a pipe layer. Japan must be more aware of the fact that it is beginning to exert a considerable influence on both the U.S. and China.

Japan's domestic politics are a mess, and it is a long way from displaying the image of a political power. Whether Japan can become such a political power depends on whether it can exhibit its strength on the international political stage.

International political power requires much more than just economic might, and in my opinion military force does not even come into the equation. In the end, I believe that international political power depends on a country's self-image and doctrine. Only when it has developed a self-image can a country have an international image.

Japan can no longer put off the task of establishing a self-image. Discussion on the matter is not lacking, but the national goals and core values of Japan remain unclear. To establish a self-image, a

country must have a clear doctrine and philosophy to support its national identity. The country's dignity as a state depends on it.

Japan's present advocacy of freedom and democracy is fuzzy and lacks persuasion. After all, the constitution of China stipulates freedom and democracy, too. While continuing to adhere to these universal values, Japan must move a step further and convey a clearer doctrine to the world.

For example, when China turns the screws on human rights, Japan should adopt a policy based on a clear doctrine. In the past this was criticized as meddling in the internal affairs of another country, but with the spread of information and the weakening of national boundaries, this is no longer the case. Japan also needs to develop a policy based on a clear doctrine on the issue of opening its doors wider to foreigners.

The U.S. deserves praise for repeatedly taking in such dissidents as Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Fang Lizhi. It is a sign of good health. Such universal issues transcend national borders and ideologies. They represent a country's duties beyond its borders.

If Japan goes on simply expanding its economy in the present reckless manner, it will turn into an extremely selfish and lax nation indeed. To develop real international political power, it must formulate a clear diplomatic doctrine and philosophy and muster up the courage and policies to put these into practice. This task can no longer be ignored.

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