

# Shaping A New Pathway for Global Cooperation with Europe

By **FURUKAWA Katsuhisa**

In January 2008, China used veto in the UN Security Council when the Council tried to adopt a resolution condemning the military junta of Myanmar for suppressing its people, which was a very rare case for China to use its veto for the sake of Myanmar's junta. There is an alarming view within the Japanese government that China may possibly intend to promote its principle of "non-interference with domestic affairs of other countries" as a new global standard for addressing such human rights problems of other countries, supported by the G 77. If this is the case, it would be a serious challenge to the UN efforts to operationalize the principles laid out in the famous report, "Responsibility to Protect" which argues for the collective responsibility of the international community to take whatever action necessary when a state fails or is unwilling to protect its own people from a mass atrocity.

Similarly, even in other areas of global issues, such as trade, environment, climate change, arms proliferation or nation building, political competition over the choice of "global standards" has become ever more intense, as represented by the recent confrontations and stalemates in many international negotiations, including the World Trade Organization rounds, Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on biological Diversity, or United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Certainly, the "global standards" can significantly affect the international community's efforts to address various global challenges, which can also affect the benefits or costs of particular states.

For any country, "national standard" is a manifestation of its value system or way of thinking since it lays the political, legal and administrative foundations of how the nation and its people behave. Given this reality, the current political competition over the global standards is a reflection of the competition of various value systems among the nation states.

In this light, Japan needs to invest more political resources in shaping "global standards" in various fields. Such endeavor requires Japan to place more importance on the adoption of a value-based approach. Traditionally, value has been viewed as an idealistic concept, but now it has certainly come to play a pragmatic function as well.

Japan used to limit its role in the international community as a “bridge” between the developing and developed countries, and has refrained from playing a key role in proposing “global standards” creatively fully utilizing its own idea and values. Now, however, given the increasing salience of “global standards”, Japan should consider the relative merits and costs associated with such an approach, and begin to broaden and deepen cooperation with others countries with whom Japan shares similar values.

Certainly, as many have argued, Japan should also cherish the so-called "Asian values", a values believed to be commonly shared among Asian countries including China. However, given the reality that many problems and challenges transcend beyond the regional boundaries, holding on to such "Asian values" alone may not be appropriate in addressing those global problems and challenges. Asian countries and societies themselves have been also changing, as a new generation of civil societies bloom in many parts of this region. Japan should incorporate into its diplomatic strategy more components associated with universal values in order to shaping its value-based approach.

A value-based approach is essential in Japan’s engagement with China. Considering the future projection of China’s economic development, Japan could probably lose its advantage over China economically and militarily on a quantitative scale. Many believe that China may surpass Japan in terms of GDP in the very near future. Even militarily, the high end estimate of China's military expenditures of the fiscal year 2007 has already reached to more than three times Japan's defense budget, according to a report by US Defense Department. In view of the severe constraint on Japan's national budget, it is almost a fantasy to dream of a massive increase in defense expenditure. It is already a disadvantageous game for Japan to compete with China on a "quantitative" level.

Instead, Japan should start a new game, fully utilizing its soft power and value to the maximum extent for its diplomatic advantage, and steer China into this new arena to engage in a “qualitative” competition. This new arena should not be limited to the Asian region alone, but rather be expanded to a global scale. By so doing, Japan is expected to cope with the rising influence of China more effectively and to lead China to become a responsible stakeholder in the world.

In order to play such a value-based game, Japan needs new “allies” and “friends” in the world. From this perspective, especially, Japan should revisit its strategy toward Europe and strengthen cooperation with Europe on multiple fronts to operationalize such a value-based approach.

Traditionally, Europe has been regarded as a remote region and generally viewed as “outsider” from Asia. However, Japan should review the reality that many of today’s important problems and challenges cut across regions, and the importance of “values” in coping with such various global challenges. Conceptually, there are many areas where Japan can explore its strategic cooperation with Europe.

Even geographically, Europe could become much closer to Asia, when (probably no longer “if”) the North poll may melt away in the near future. The geographical distance between Asia and Europe will be significantly reduced given the emergence of a new pathway through the North poll. When Europe may interact with Asia more intensely, Europe may come to have deeper understanding and more pragmatic approach toward Asia, and may come to become one of the indispensable players in Asian affairs. Climate change can bring about important influence over geopolitical landscape as well. Japan should start designing a new pathway for cooperation with Europe on a global scale.

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