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## Is Japan's Diplomacy Ready for "a Rainy Day"?

By NABESHIMA Keizo

The abrupt resignation of Fukuda Yasuo as Prime Minister of Japan drove the country into a diplomatic vacuum. As the inauguration of Aso Taro's new administration is soon to be followed by dissolution of the House of Representatives for a general election, diplomatic stalemate seems inevitable. A seismic political event like change of administration demands a sweeping review of the country's foreign policy. Both the ruling and opposition parties turn inward-looking for the coming general election and neglect to consider what should be done in the world to pursue Japan's national interest. This inward-looking attitude of political parties itself undermines the national interest of Japan. New Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law, authorizing the Maritime Self-Defense Force of Japan to engage in the refueling mission in the Indian Ocean, will expire next January. Unless the New Komeito, a ruling coalition partner, alters its opposition to the extension of the Law, chances of a second vote on it by the House of Representatives are quite low, even though the ruling coalition maintains a two-thirds majority in the House. If the disaccord within the administration over such national fundamentals as the security policy could not be arbitrated, *raison d'etre* of the coalition must seriously be questioned.

While Japan is stalled with the "Twisted Diet," world affairs are undergoing rapid change. Japan's national security environment is incessantly exposed to such grave situations as the advent of "the New Cold War" provoked by the invasion of Georgia by Russia, Afghanistan in disarray with military thrust by Taliban followed by America's resolution of troop increase, nuclear nonproliferation regime being undermined by the civil nuclear cooperation between U.S. and India, speculations that North Korean leader Kim Jong Il suffered a serious health setback, and North Korea's construction of a launch site of ICBM (intercontinental ballistic missiles), etc.. Disruption of international economy which stems from the financial unrest in America creates anxiety upon national economy and life of Japan. Unless we are vigilant about what is lying underneath such individual incidents, "doomsday" comes all of a sudden. Typical of this case were the double Nixon Shocks, i.e.; the suspension of convertibility of U.S. dollar to gold in 1971 and Nixon's surprising visit to China in 1972.

The biggest responsibilities of Prime Minister are to protect and maintain the territorial integrity as well as to pursue and secure the national interest of Japan. Almost 50 years have passed

since Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, cornerstone of the bilateral alliance between the two countries, was revised in 1960. Throughout these years, Japan's national security relied upon the nuclear deterrence of U.S.. I should say Japanese people might be accused of taking this privilege for granted. Alliance is not a one-way traffic. The Treaty would be meaningless if Japan should not pay due cost for the alliance and U.S. should fail to find it worthwhile to maintain it. Summing up the general view of U.S. including that of the Republican party, Democrat Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the U. S. House of Representatives, strongly requested to Kono Yohei, Speaker of the Japanese House of Representatives, that Japan should appreciate and extend its refueling mission. The new administration of U.S. due in next January would regard Japan's extension of the mission as a litmus test for its unequivocal will to preserve the two countries' alliance.

Military cooperation is not the only option Japan can take to protect its national interest. Japan's standing in the international community would be determined by the extent to which it contributes to the world to the best of its national capacity. It is therefore imperative that Japan expresses itself in a convincing manner and perform its duty in a tangible way in multilateral negotiations, where interests of different countries clash, over such topics as peace keeping operations, global warming countermeasures or World Trade Organisation, etc.. Japan must be ready to sacrifice itself to accommodate the interests on a global scale. Thus, strong leadership is indispensable, with which to persuade the nation from a viewpoint of a higher order of national interest. If politicians are too busy jockeying for power in day-to-day political scene to lend an ear to these arguments, future of Japan looks bleak.

**(This is the English translation of an article written by Mr. NABESHIMA Keizo, former Chief Editorial Writer for Kyodo News, which originally appeared on the BBS "Hyakka-Seiho" of JFIR on September 17, 2008.)**