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## The Japan 2008 G8 Summit and the Asian New Deal

By KAWATO Akio

As has been mentioned before, 2008 will be a year filled with significant events taking place around the world. In December 2007 South Korea will have its presidential election, while Russia will hold its general elections. Just a few months later, in March 2008, Russians will vote for a new president, as will the Taiwanese. Beijing will host the Summer Olympics in August, followed by the US presidential election in November.

Somewhere in the midst of all this (either June or July) Japan will play host to the G8 Summit. Although taking the reins at the summit will pose a challenge for Japan, Japan should capitalize on G8 as an opportunity to turn the world's eyes to Asia.

What type of world can we expect a little more than a year from now? While plenty will hinge upon whether US forces withdraw from Iraq or not, in any case President Bush will have only six months tenure remaining in the Oval Office, so it would be in his best interests to leave behind some concrete, positive results in Asia.

As for the new Russian president, this will be his first G8 Summit and he will be under considerable pressure upon his arrival in Japan. By that time, Russia will most likely be in the throes of even greater inflationary pressure and the issue of the divvying up of political interests will rear its ugly head immediately following the transfer of power, making for a somewhat uneasy situation.

Whether China participates in the summit or not, China is a major player on the global stage and, considering that the Beijing Olympics will open right after G8, China will be more than eager to cooperate in helping the summit launch proactive initiatives regarding Asia.

Within the EU, the situation is difficult to foresee with the changing of the guard in France and the UK, but since Asia became the top trading partner for the EU as well as the US in 2006, it is doubtful that there will be any objection to discussing the problems that face Asia. Russia as well, in its efforts to bring stability and progress to its territories in the Russian Far East, faces pressing issues in its relations with Asia.

Today's Asia is in a centrifugal mode. While East Asia is witnessing a rise in the standard of living, its citizens are taking a far more active interest in political matters, personally

reevaluating their respective governments' post-war diplomacy. All East Asian democracies are the pinnacle of populism, but within these platforms the extreme nationalism card is being played by a number of political forces, and with different interests.

Despite the fact that the majority does not embrace extreme nationalism in Japan, its public opinion reacts to harsh criticism upon them in China and South Korea. That in turn leads to China and Korea rebuking Japan, starting a dangerous spiral of mutual agitation.

What is needed is to lessen the mutual feelings of suspicion between the peoples of Asia. And in this the CSCE (The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in 1974, in which almost all European countries, the USA, Canada and the Soviet Union agreed upon the maintenance of the status quo in borders, inaugurating a row of confidence-building measures) might serve as a good example. If Asia, the USA and the EU ensure the status quo in current borders in Asia, it will create a centripetal momentum in Asia: a New Deal in Asia.

Pundits may object, saying that the countries in Asia are too diverse in their level of economic development and social systems. However, the gaps in development level are quickly being reduced. The behavior and mores of the younger generations are becoming more and more similar. True, we have the Taiwan issue and the North Korean issue. But contrary to some alarmist views all interested parties in these issues are interested in maintaining the status quo.

And there is an underlying cause above all others that bring the peoples of Asia together in their common vital interests. That is the principle of global free trade. As long as this principle is kept all over the world, East Asian countries can peacefully prosper. Trade needs political stability and maintenance of the status quo. Political confrontation emanating from egos of the "nation states" is not to be welcomed.

The "nation state" is a product of the past. Countries used to fight with each other for more territories, seeking wealth and later a market for selling their goods. The "nation state" was formed as a tool to collect tax directly from people and to recruit soldiers. The nation state came to being in Europe, but today it is now being gradually dissolved there.

Asia should and can follow Europe now. Together with the US and the EU it could embark upon a heroic undertaking: to create a viable system for security and well-being in Asia. The theme for the 2008 summit needs to be stated at the G8 Heiligendamm Summit in Germany, which will take place in early June. Even if Japan begins talks on the theme now, it may be too late.

**(This is the English Translation of an article written by KAWATO Akio, President of Japan-World Trends, which originally appeared in "CEAC Policy BBS" on February 11-12, 2007 and then posted on the website of Japan-World Trends**

**([http://www.akiokawato.com/en/world\\_trends/the\\_japan\\_2008\\_g8\\_summit\\_and\\_t.php](http://www.akiokawato.com/en/world_trends/the_japan_2008_g8_summit_and_t.php)).**)