

December 4, 2007

## **Aiming For Multi-Layered System of an East Asian Community and an East Asian Economic Cooperation Organization**

**BY NAKASONE Yasuhiro**

The phrase of an "East Asian Community" is being widely acknowledged. The basic unit of an "East Asian Community" is made up of 13 countries, namely, 10 countries of ASEAN plus 3 countries in north. That is the way it is being talked about so far. Former Prime Minister KOIZUMI Junichiro went to the UN and made a speech saying he agreed to an "East Asian Community." China has been advocating an "East Asian Community," and ASEAN also agrees. Therefore everyone agrees on the phrase of an "East Asian Community." Nevertheless, when it comes to its contents, there is still nothing there. However, it is important to build an "East Asian Community" in order to have a common ideal of the community across each country. When going about this task, the process of talking with each other, cooperating and consulting with each other is very crucial.

But that is not all. There is another thing that needs to be done – that is to include Australia, New Zealand, India and the U.S. What I am saying here is that we have to build an East Asian Economic Cooperation Organization of 17 countries, namely, 13 plus those 4 countries. Then the following question might arise. Why should the U.S. be included? Some people might say that the U.S. is not an Asian country, but neither is Australia. And also, the security of East Asia is built on the U.S. and its system of alliances – the U.S.-Japan alliance, the U.S.-Korean alliance, the U.S.-Thai alliance, the U.S.-Philippine alliance, the U.S.-Australia-New Zealand alliance, the special relationship between the U.S. and Singapore. In this way, the security of East Asian countries depends on the web of U.S. alliances that stretch around the Pacific Ocean. Economic stability will also be guaranteed by it. Without a security base, economic cooperation and an economic community cannot be created. The reason why European countries could create the EU was because of NATO. The EU, and formerly the EC, has been built on the North Atlantic Treaty.

If we consider future relations with China, relations with the U.S. and many other factors coming into play, an "East Asian Community" must be well built up by the 13 countries. Of course, those 13 countries are distinct with different cultures and languages, and separated by great distances making such a task less than easy. But the important thing is having a goal to build up the community. In the case of an East Asian Economic Cooperation Organization, issues of nationality and state are negligible because economic activities are going beyond sovereignty. But in this situation, security issues cannot be ignored. Therefore I think it is better to include the U.S. in an East Asian Economic Cooperation Organization. The future of East Asia needs to be envisaged in such a multi-layered way. I do not know if it will take 10 years or 20 years, but I believe one of the litmus tests of the process will be whether the Japanese can at the very least hold onto this ideal, talk with other Asian nations, create chances and live as one of members of Asian nations. As for the descendants of the people of Japan, we need to convey to them that we have this ideal, and that they should continue on with it – unless the Japanese hold onto this idea of huge scale and global purpose, I believe the state, Japan will come to lose the meaning of its existence.

**(This is the English translation of an article written by Mr. NAKASONE Yasuhiro, Chairman of The Council on East Asian Community and former Prime Minister of Japan, which originally appeared on the BBS "Hyakka-Somei" of CEAC on October 19, 2007.)**