

Japan Forlorn in the World

By **MORI Toshimitsu**

Japan is clearly at a dead end. It is not clear at all what kind of strategies or policy responses the Japanese government is trying to take in order to tackle problems facing Japan both at home and abroad. However, all of those problems are so serious and need quick response without exception. It makes no sense to argue that this stalemate should be ascribed to the rise of the "Twisted Diet" since last summer, where the ruling parties have controlled the House of Representatives whereas the opposition parties have controlled the House of Councilors. Such an argument is totally lacking political acumen.

Moreover, there was a sheer ineptitude in the discussions over the appointment of a new Governor of the Bank of Japan, which focused solely on whether a new Governor could be elected in time for the G7 Meeting. It has simply disclosed to the rest of the world the fact that Japan is the country which cannot decide anything. Faltering world economy triggered by the sub-prime mortgage crisis in the U.S. is not expected to be put to rest. Rather, it is expected to become much tougher to the extent that Japanese economy receives major blow. Needless to say, the Japanese should know better than to believe in the recurrence of the *Kamikaze*, or Divine Wind, which dispersed Mongolian invasion fleets in the thirteenth century, and to expect it again to sweep away national calamity.

No one expects that Japan, as a host of G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit, can take the strong initiative in addressing highly pressing global issues that are on the agenda of the Summit. Obviously, Japan's presence in the international society is in sharp decline, which is exemplified by the striking fact that Japan dropped to the fifth place in the ODA contributions rank in the world, although the ODA is the area where Japan used to receive high evaluations. As the Goldman Sachs indicated in its research report of last November, the proportion of G7 countries in the global economy is rapidly shrinking, to be superseded by those of the BRICs, of which China is one, now on the dramatic rise in their status in the global economy. In future, any discussions on the global economy

and world politics would be meaningless without due respect to these rising economic powers. While the realities demand a rapid structural transformation of the world, it seems that Japan is at a loss for actions, to say nothing of taking the lead in such a situation. It looks as if time stopped in Japan. Japan would eventually become a mere bystander before the trend of the world and be left behind it.

Things seem hopeless in this country unless each citizen recognizes the severity of the situation by his own mind, think by himself and copes with it by his own responsibility. Amid such responsible moves of each citizen, it is imperative that the Japanese politics should open its eye to reality as soon as possible and shift the helm to prepare itself to tackle difficulties that lie ahead of its path for the future.

(This is the English translation of an article by Ambassador MORI Toshimitsu, Adviser to a financial corporation, which originally appeared on the BBS "Giron-Hyakushutsu" of GFJ on April 15, 2008.)