

# Behind the Ito ouster

*Reagan has provided an opening for the Fukuda faction to influence Japan's prime minister, reports Richard Katz.*

Japan's Foreign Minister Masayoshi Ito, a staunch ally of U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig's China Card strategy, resigned on May 15 as a major foreign policy battle rocked Tokyo. The issue is whether Japan will continue what one politician labeled "slavish adherence" to Haig's dictates, even if they conflict with Japanese interest, or whether it will take what that politician characterized as a more independent position similar to West Germany's. The immediate focus of the fight is the immense pressure by Haig and Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger for Japan to play a strong regional military role under the aegis of a U.S.-China-Japan alliance against the U.S.S.R.

Ito strongly pushed for Tokyo to do Haig's bidding. In contrast former Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda, the apparent victor in the fight to influence Prime Minister Zenko Suzuki, argued for the more nationalist, pro-European view. The issue came to a head during the May 7-8 summit between Suzuki and President Reagan in Washington. Prior to the summit, Suzuki, a career party machine man who tends to rely on others for policy advice, publicly warned Washington not to push Japan beyond its traditional "self-defense only" posture faster than predominantly pacifist public opinion permitted. The consequence, he warned, would be that the ruling Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP) could be destabilized and perhaps even lose power to the Japan Socialist Party (JSP). The JSP, which has never held national power and whose program advocates zero economic growth, opposes close defense cooperation between Japan and the United States.

When Suzuki met privately with Reagan on May 8 for 90 minutes—three times longer than scheduled—he explained the delicate internal situation in Japan on the defense issue. According to Japanese sources, Suzuki found that the President, unlike Haig and Weinberger, understood. Reagan said he thought Japan should move ahead steadily on defense, but he pledged, "we won't put you into a corner on this. It is not our policy to pressure Japan." Suzuki also found Reagan less enamored of the China Card than Haig and Weinberger, and more interested in discussing Japan's role from a bilateral view-

point, rather than a triangular effort.

However, the joint communiqué, which was drafted by Haig's aides and simply accepted by Ito, according to knowledgeable sources, reflected Haig's views, rather than the meeting between Suzuki and Reagan. The communiqué called for an "appropriate division of labor" between both countries on defense, and called on Japan to "improve its defense capabilities in Japanese territories and in its surrounding sea and air space." The latter phrase was taken as Tokyo's submission to Weinberger's demand to Japan to take on naval responsibilities for the northwest Pacific, extending as far as the Philippines and Guam.

When Suzuki returned to Tokyo, a storm of protest arose among the press, the opposition parties, and even within Suzuki's own LDP because the communiqué seemed to commit Japan to the Haig/Weinberger cold war approach. At the next cabinet meeting, Suzuki reportedly accused Ito of siding with Haig's views against his own. Suzuki then made a public statement that virtually repudiated the communiqué's military implications. Foreign Minister Ito resigned.

Suzuki proceeded to replace Ito with one of his longtime confidants, another party machine man, former Foreign Minister Sunao Sonoda. At Sonoda's first press conference, he indicated the mood in Tokyo by casting a gratuitous aspersion on the "ubiquitous presence" of U.S. naval vessels off Japan—a U.S. ship had just reportedly cut fishermen's nets during exercises. Sonoda also informed Haig that he would have to cancel a planned visit of Haig to Tokyo in June because Sonoda, unlike Ito, was going to Europe with Suzuki at that time. The meeting was cancelled.

## The deeper fight

Behind the immediate circumstances lies a deeper, more longstanding fight on foreign policy in Japan. Former Prime Minister Fukuda is very pro-American, but he is also a Japanese nationalist. The hallmark of his 1977-78 tenure as prime minister was his alliance with two men he had known for years, French President Giscard and West German Chancellor Schmidt, an

alliance to pressure Jimmy Carter to adopt a sane international economic policy and to back off from Brzezinski's confrontation politics toward the U.S.S.R.

The Carter administration was delighted when Fukuda lost the premiership in December 1978 to Masayoshi Ohira, the man Henry Kissinger called "my favorite Japanese politician." Ohira dropped Fukuda's collaboration with Germany and France and echoed the Carter line on every issue, even against Japanese national interest. This ranged from dropping oil-for-technology cooperation with Mexico at Brzezinski's behest, to exchanging defense delegations with China and being the only nation to abide by Carter's sanctions against the U.S.S.R. Ohira also raised interest rates on loans to developing countries and thus lost billions in Japanese machinery exports to European competitors.

When Ohira died of a sudden heart attack during Fukuda's attempt to oust him last summer, Masayoshi Ito, Ohira's longtime alter ego, tried to step into his mentor's shoes. Ito and Ohira both stem from the pro-British "strike north" fascist faction of the Mitsui group of the 1930s and had worked together looting China in 1938 on the misnamed Asian Development Board.

Instead, with Fukuda's connivance, a compromise candidate was chosen, Ohira faction member Zenko Suzuki—the "Robert Strauss of Japan," whom no one had ever expected to become prime minister. Fukuda hoped to influence Suzuki but until recently the more effective control was that of Ito, who garnered the foreign minister's post.

Ito continued the Ohira policy. Business complained they were losing billions of dollars in deals with the Soviets because they did not emulate Europe's disregard of Carter's sanctions. Ito insisted the sanctions remain. Ito also continued Ohira's support for the China Card, going as far as giving direct Japanese foreign aid to the genocidal Chinese-run Pol Pot forces in Kampuchea.

Kyodo News reports that Peking is upset at Ito's defeat. "China regarded Ohira as the most reliable Japanese politician who sought close ties with China and the U.S. to prevent the Soviet Union from advancing into Asia and the Far East. For China, the outgoing foreign minister [Ito] was . . . faithfully following the diplomatic policy line laid down by Ohira."

Beginning perhaps as early as March, in a very quiet, behind-the-scenes manner, Fukuda's influence began to grow. In March, Fukuda came to Washington as the "eyes and ears" for Suzuki despite the fact that Ito was to visit Washington days later.

The momentum escalated in April when Reagan vetoed Haig on a number of key foreign policy issues, especially the lifting of the grain embargo. The move, which Suzuki stridently complained was made without consulting or even informing Japan, made it difficult to continue Ito's defiance of Japanese business wishes to

end Japan's own embargo against the Soviets.

At that point, certain European-oriented actions occurred. Toshio Doko, the powerful former chief of Keidanren, Japan's major business federation, made an unscheduled stop in Moscow on a return trip from Western Europe. Kyodo comments that the Doko stop-over was made "in the softened East-West tensions following the lifting of the grain embargo." Soon thereafter, R. Sasaki, head of the Democratic Socialist Party (not to be confused with the pro-Peking JSP), visited Western Europe and then Moscow. On return he denounced Tokyo's "slavish adherence" to Washington and, at a one-hour meeting, Sasaki urged Suzuki to develop ties to Western Europe as strong as Japan's ties to the U.S. The DSP is heavily funded by Nippon Steel, the firm run by current Keidanren chieftain Yoshiro Inayama, which is promoting an end to the sanctions.

Sometime during this period, Suzuki decided to make a trip to Europe in June, in between the summit with Reagan and the Ottawa seven-nation summit in July. According to Japanese business sources, Suzuki's main interest is meeting with Fukuda's longtime friend, German Chancellor Schmidt.

The May 12 issue of *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* commented, "Fukuda has snapped out of his one-time lethargy as a sequel to his recent meeting with Reagan. . . . Suzuki has to bow deeply in the direction of Fukuda."

One consequence of the still-quiet shift in Japan was a remarkable editorial in the same paper, known as the voice of business, which for the first time condemned Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker's high interest-rate policy. Their politically significant reason echoes the line Schmidt announced that he would explain to Reagan during their late May summit, "Such a high interest-rate policy of the United States works to push up the entire international interest rates of Japan and European countries to an unnecessarily high level. Especially for countries like Japan and West Germany . . . the concern [is] that deflationary effects from high interest rates could spread."

As a party machine man, Suzuki was under pressure to respond to Fukuda's urgings: Suzuki found it difficult to ignore business sentiment or the destabilizing effects on the LDP of Haig's policies.

But Fukuda's view would not have prevailed had Suzuki not become aware of the dispute between Haig and Weinberger on the one hand and Reagan on the other. Their personal meeting was key. For example, at the end of the meeting, which mostly concerned defense, Suzuki asked Reagan to end the Carter-imposed restrictions on Japan's nuclear fuel reprocessing program. Reagan immediately agreed. When Ito had brought the same issue up with Haig in March, an issue vital for Japan's economy, Haig simply stalled.

Suzuki also found Reagan's view on the China Card different from Haig's. Japan is very concerned that good U.S.-China ties be maintained, and Suzuki urged Reagan not to disturb those ties. Suzuki also commented in his Washington press conference that China should be kept part of the "Western alliance." However, the Japanese, particularly Fukuda, are concerned that the U.S. not excessively build up China militarily—partly because Tokyo does not want to provoke Moscow too much, and partly because Tokyo does not trust Peking's ambitions. Reagan has opposed the Haig/Weinberger push for arms sales to China.

When Suzuki realized that Reagan did not agree with Haig's pressure on Japan on regional defense and the China Card—a politically untenable proposition in Japan—Suzuki felt he had maneuvering room to respond to internal Japanese political reality. Ito was out.

On May 9, one day after the summit, one of the top U.S. backers of Ohira and then Ito, former U.S. ambassador to Japan Edwin O. Reischauer gave an interview to the *Mainichi Shimbun* in which he revealed a fact that could destabilize any Japanese regime. In a country still mindful of Hiroshima, Reischauer stated that under a secret 1960 understanding, the U.S. was bringing nuclear missiles into Japanese ports when its ships landed there, in violation of the public treaty prohibiting this without prior consultation. Japan does not make, use, or allow entry of nuclear weapons on its territory.

Published by *Mainichi* a couple days following Ito's resignation, the Reischauer interview made headlines throughout Japan and was used in the U.S. press to speculate on the possible downfall of Suzuki himself. Typical was the May 20 *Christian Science Monitor*, which commented, "The U.S. may have to revise its expectations of greater military cooperation from Japan. For one thing it may not be able to rely on Suzuki to deliver the goods—in view of mutterings within the corridors of power that his government may not survive the current furor over defense."

The Reischauer revelation is being used by the JSP to destabilize Suzuki at the same time that it is stepping up a campaign to shut down all nuclear plants in Japan—the same scenario used by the JSP's Socialist International affiliates against Schmidt and Giscard.

There are two theories about Ohira-backer Reischauer's motivations. One view is that many people in Japan genuinely agree with Haig and Weinberger rather than Reagan, but have been afraid to challenge public opinion in Japan. Reischauer, according to this view, wanted to force the issue presuming the pro-buildup forces would eventually win.

Another view holds that Reischauer was aghast that the formerly Ito-controlled Suzuki was coming under the influence of Fukuda, and that Reischauer made the statement deliberately to destabilize Suzuki.

## Why U.S. aid to the Zia will destroy the nation

by Daniel Sneider, Asia Editor

This writer recently returned from a two-week visit to Europe where I had extended discussions with numerous exiled Pakistani political leaders. Each of them expressed dark fears about the future of his nation, doubts about its continued existence as a country under the current military regime of General Zia Ul-Haq. People who looked on America as a friend, they asked me how the American government could possibly consider giving massive arms aid—\$2.5 billion over five years—to a regime that has pitted itself so completely against its own population.

This is a question Congress must ask itself before acting further. The arms package is being sold as a measure to assure the security of Pakistan, a country supposedly vital to defense of the Persian Gulf-Southwest Asia region facing the threat of Soviet aggression, and useful as a back-door ally of China.

In reality, this program will undermine security and destabilize this vital region. It is not an astrological feat to predict that before the termination of this five-year plan, South Asia will have witnessed one or more of the following events: the breakup of Pakistan into several different entities; a war between India and Pakistan, possibly involving the use of nuclear weapons, that could trigger a wider conflict involving China, the Soviet Union, and the United States; chaos, famine, epidemics throughout South Asia, and resulting depopulation along the lines of the Carter administration's Global 2000 neo-Malthusian policy.

These predictions are based on several clear facts. The first is that the aid given will never be used for the purpose claimed, that is, for defense against a primarily Soviet-based threat to Pakistan's security. The second is that the Zia regime is itself so unstable and insecure that it is just as likely to provoke conflict to preserve itself as anything else. And third, in the unlikely case that such arms aid were actually used in an engagement with Soviet forces, the outcome of such a conflict is guaranteed no matter what the scale of aid, unless the United States is prepared to enter the conflict directly.

Irving Kristol, who can hardly be accused of being pro-Soviet, made some of these points in an April 29 *Wall Street Journal* commentary terming the Pakistan