

High noon in Japan's political warfare

by Daniel Sneider, Asia Editor, from Tokyo

For aficionados of traditional Japanese drama, it has not been necessary during the past month to visit the Kabuki-za in Tokyo, the home theater of traditional Japanese Kabuki plays. The drama has been performed instead on the stage of Japanese politics. The main performers are available for the audience every day on their television set and in their newspaper. But as in every good Japanese drama, the crucial action is taking place offstage, behind the curtain, where the *kuro-maku* (literally "black curtain," meaning a wire-puller) perform their manipulations.

The title of this grand drama of the Japanese, the crisis of the ruling Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP), is known to all the audience—it is the tale of the Kaku-Fuku war. The Kaku-Fuku war is the name given the decade-long political battle, the bitter political rivalry within the ruling party between former Premiers Kakuei Tanaka and Takeo Fukuda. Ever since Tanaka outmaneuvered Fukuda, the chosen successor of the late Premier Sato, to become the premier in an intra-party battle in 1972 that saw millions of dollars change hands, the war has claimed the political lives of five prime ministers. The last was Zenko Suzuki.

Suzuki's early October decision to step down as leader of his party, a post which automatically carried with it the premiership, came as a surprise to many in Japan. His term as LDP president was to expire in December, but with the support of three of the five major factions of the LDP—his own, and those of former Premier Tanaka and Yasuhiro Nakasone—Suzuki seemed assured of re-election. This, despite increasingly open and vocal opposition by the so-called non-mainstream factions of Fukuda, Economic Planning Director Toshio Komoto, and the small group led by Science and Technology Minister Ichiro Nakagawa. The mathematics of the factional showdown told the average observer that Suzuki would gain re-election.

Observers not so easily swayed by the "logic" of the situation smelled something different in the air: the Kaku-Fuku war was on again. By late September Fukuda had made his move to place himself in opposition to Suzuki. According to the best-informed sources, former Premier Nobusuke Kishi—an elder statesman of the party, the godfather of the Fukuda faction, and the father-in-law of Fukuda's chosen successor, Shintaro Abe—had decided to "destroy Suzuki."

The hapless Suzuki was not the real target. He was maligned only because he had proven himself to be what all knew him to be when he was placed in the premiership in the summer of 1980 after the sudden death of Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira. Suzuki was shown as a man who would make no decisions, take no leadership stance, and do anything to maintain the "balance" and "harmony" of the ruling party. Faced with a mounting international economic crisis, a deteriorating Japanese economic situation, a crisis in the all-important U.S.-Japan relationship, Zenko Suzuki could not provide the resoluteness to deal with these problems. This made him an easy target for the Fukuda-led insurrection.

The real target of this attack was Zenko Suzuki's sponsor, the man who kept him in power, the most powerful, most feared, and—by some, most hated—man in the LDP, Kakuei Tanaka. The Tanaka political machine, built on a system of patronage that would make Chicago's legendary Mayor Daley blush in envy, is cracking. Its leader, ousted from office by a financial scandal, and then charged with taking bribes from the Lockheed Aircraft company during his tenure, faces the end of his prolonged trial on those charges sometime in 1983. Tanaka, who technically is no longer even a member of the LDP, but sits in the Diet as an independent, is now facing his moment of truth. It is indeed high noon for Tanaka.

Takeo Fukuda has only one objective in this crisis—not the ouster of Suzuki, not the installation of himself, Abe, or someone else as premier, but to destroy the power of Tanaka and his regime in the ruling party. Fukuda's intentions were made clear by mid-September when he adopted an openly anti-Suzuki stance, thereby ending the temporary truce in the Kaku-Fuku war embodied in the post-Ohira selection of Suzuki as premier with the consent of both Tanaka and Fukuda. Once that truce ended, it was clear Suzuki would have to go.

Now, the Kaku-Fuku war has been carried to new heights, as the failure thus far of Tanaka and Fukuda to reach a new truce and compromise choice to succeed Suzuki has forced the launching of an unprecedented open election for the LDP presidency. Four candidates have entered the race: Yasuhiro Nakasone, who has the backing of the Tanaka and Suzuki forces; Economic Planning Director Komoto; Science and Technology Minister Nakagawa, and Minister of International Trade and Industry Shintaro Abe. In essence, the sim-

plest explanation for this crisis in the ruling party is that this is the last act of the tale of the Kaku-Fuku war—not yet the end, but the beginning of the end.

The deeper reality

The simplest explanation, however, is not the only explanation. The personal rivalries and factional politics of the LDP are complex enough to understand, but they are only one level of reality. The problem in analyzing the often byzantine events of Japanese political life is to find the link between this war and the deeper issues, the policy questions that are being debated and confronted by the Japanese. The relationship between the factional struggles and policy issues is not direct. One cannot assemble a list of LDP politicians and associate that group with a certain policy stance opposed by some other LDP group. A relationship between the factional struggles and policy issues does indeed exist, but the relationship could perhaps be likened to two parallel lines—one representing the factional struggles and one representing the policy issues—which lines are intersected by many additional lines from many different angles. On a given issue, such as defense policy, one finds actually contradictory views among groups allied in the LDP factional struggles.

However, it is a simple truth that the environment in which the internal political crises occur is shaped by basic policy issues such as the world strategic and economic crisis, their effect on the Japanese economy, and how Japan should respond to these trends. Most people in Japan—common people and leaders alike—perceive a desperate need for Japan to respond to hostile international developments with policies that ensure Japan's national interest. But just what those policies should be remains a deeply feared and disputed question. It is against this essential background of indecision in the midst of the need to act, that the Japanese political crisis is unfolding.

Over the past decade, as turmoil has increased in the world, the most basic assumptions of Japanese foreign policy have been shaken, undermining the relatively stable conditions of continuous post-war LDP rule of Japan. During these 10 years, one cabinet after another has fallen, the instability reflecting the failure of Japan's political leadership to evolve a clear, strong policy to confront increasingly hostile conditions abroad.

At this moment, the fundamental issues confronting Japan are political and economic in nature. Japan's economy, though in relatively better shape than other advanced nations, is in severe recession, manifested in a deceleration of exports, a slowdown of industrial production, and a growing budget deficit. The ostensible focus of much debate in Japanese government and political circles is "administrative reform." This policy, partly carried out by the Suzuki cabinet, seeks to curb the budget deficit and trim expenditures through increased "efficiency in government."

Prime ministerial candidate Yasuhiro Nakasone, head of

the Administrative Management Agency, is committed to this policy, although there are doubts about how tenaciously Nakasone, who is labeled an opportunist, upholds it. Toshio Komoto, on the other hand, has waged his campaign for the premiership solely on economic issues, and on his call for domestic stimulation of the economy including budget stimulation, as the necessary response to the shrinking world economy. One senior business leader told this writer that the key question about the new premier will be "whether he is an expansionist or a contractionist. . . . The best prime minister is one who will expand Japanese international business activities, and at the same time, make government smaller."

Next in line to these economic questions is the military issue of how to respond to increasing U.S. pressures for both an increased level of defense spending and an expanded Japanese security role in the Western Pacific. The recent protest by Southeast Asian Presidents Suharto of Indonesia and Marcos of the Philippines that a proposed Japanese defense role extending down into the South China Sea may represent a danger of renewed "Japanese militarism," has stirred controversy in Japan, especially after protests from other Asians over revision of Japanese textbooks which softpedaled Japan's war crimes in World War II.

It is widely assumed that Nakasone would be the best man for those, including those in Washington, who favor increased defense spending. He has a reputation as a "hawk," a reputation dating from the early 1970s, when, as defense minister, he pushed this line. However, sources at the U.S. embassy in Tokyo pointed out that Nakasone was far from easy to deal with for U.S. officials at that time. He is very unpredictable in his views. Certain U.S. circles view Nakasone as a "dangerous nationalist" who would upgrade defense spending on an "independent" Japanese basis rather than within the framework of increased U.S.-Japanese security cooperation. Ichiro Nakagawa, another of the candidates, is also considered a "hawk," but of the right-wing nationalist variety. On this subject Komoto's views, and those of Shin-taro Abe, are not clearly known.

Encompassing both these issues is Japan's stance on the future of U.S.-Japan relations. An interesting view of this issue was put forward to this writer by a leading left-wing Dietman (member of parliament) of the Japanese Socialist Party. He characterized the battle within the LDP as a reflection of division within the Japanese ruling circles between two broad groups—those that are called "pro-U.S." and who wish to maintain the status quo, and those who want Japan to take a more "independent role."

The latter position, the Dietman contended, is characterized by a move toward increasing trade and economic cooperation with the Soviet Union in Siberia, with China, and with Southeast Asia. He pointed to Shigeo Nagano, a leading business figure who has recently been promoting Siberian development cooperation, as an example of this tendency. That Dietman, who himself favors this course, interestingly

preferred Komoto as the LDP candidate, but also characterized Nakasone and Nakagawa as “nationalists,” who would push “self-reliant military capabilities.”

Nakasone has been trying to shake the label “anti-American” in recent years, traveling to the United States and proclaiming his fealty to the U.S.-Japan alliance. However, it is known that there is a great distrust of him in Washington circles (though also strong support) because of his unpredictability. The common Japanese political assessment of Nakasone is that “he has no views, only ambitions.”

Komoto may favor a firmer stance vis-à-vis Washington tensions, because of his strong views in favor of international economic expansionary policies, his opposition to high U.S. interest rates, and his generally pro-industrial standpoint. The Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), a stronghold of pro-growth and pro-industry views, is generally most favorable to Komoto on policy grounds, although some in MITI fear he would be politically weak.

Perhaps the more crucial question is how the political process will proceed in the next few weeks leading up to the late-November two-track elections. The LDP’s 1.1 million members are scheduled to cast their votes for one of the four candidates on Nov. 23, and the three top vote-getters will then face each other in a runoff election, with the LDP’s Diet members casting the final vote on Nov. 25. It remains to be seen whether the election process is even carried through to the end, as the party “elders,” fearful that the volatile open election might severely fracture the party, are thought likely to make further efforts to reach a compromise.

The bottom line is whether the process produces a government, no matter who heads it, which is stable and strong, and therefore capable of adopting decisive policies, or another weak “transitional” government.

The war gets worse

This time, not even the most experienced of analysts are willing to submit a forecast on this process. “Everything that has happened has been predictable,” one of Japan’s leading journalists told me. “But we have reached the limit of predictability, and entered the realm of the unknown.” Complicating the picture, the journalist said, is the difficulty of saying how the LDP leaders will react under the exceptional circumstances of an open election. Moreover, the high degree of emotion on the part of the factional leaders cannot be underestimated, as shown by their failure thus far to reach a compromise in the wake of Suzuki’s resignation despite heated effort by the party “elders.”

When Suzuki resigned on Oct. 12, calling for party unity to be maintained by choosing his successor through a negotiated “consensus process,” the LDP leadership was confronted with a four-day deadline on their compromise efforts, since Oct. 16 was the date by which names of all candidates for the scheduled open primary had to have been submitted. An effort was quickly mounted, involving, among others,

former premiers Fukuda, Kishi, and Takeo Miki, to bridge the factional rivalries and agree on a successor, so as to avoid the volatile open election.

When the Oct. 16 deadline was reached, no agreement had been found, due to the unwillingness of Fukuda and Tanaka to yield in any way, thus clearing the way for the primary. In the negotiations, the Tanaka and Suzuki factions proposed that their ally, Nakasone, be the “compromise choice,” while Fukuda and his allies insisted Nakasone would be little more than another puppet of Tanaka. Someone other than Nakasone would have to be the compromise choice, they said, or the election would be held.

This stance by Fukuda served to emphasize the “fight to the finish” nature of the current showdown, since it is widely known that all but one of the party leaders oppose holding an election, including Fukuda. Aside from the unpredictable nature of such an election, the power of the party’s factional leaders like Fukuda stems from their role—traditional Japanese style—in forging compromise through a backstage “consensus process,” and an election necessarily entails some degree of erosion of this traditional power. Despite this prospect, Fukuda has thus far been willing to force an election, hoping to further loosen Tanaka’s grip on the party. Of the party leaders, only Toshio Komoto is thought to actually favor an election, since he is considered the front-runner due to his grass-roots popularity, and the election would probably increase his chances of becoming premier.

After Oct. 16, the four candidates now campaigning submitted their names for the election. In the final negotiating session, the party “elders” agreed that, though the names would be submitted, all campaigning would be delayed a week, until Oct. 23, to provide the elders with more time to negotiate a compromise choice.

The week that followed was filled with drama. Day after day the party elders met. A committee of three, consisting of

The four contenders for the Prime Ministry



Shintaro Abe

Fukuda, Suzuki and Tanaka—lieutenant and party Secretary-General Suzumu Nikaido, was appointed to carry out the negotiations. Many others participated, including several powerful *kuromaku*, who played crucial backstage roles. Rumors were flying of deals and counterdeals.

The tensions mounted up to Oct. 22, as the meetings went into the early morning hours. Television viewers, watching at 2:00 a.m. could witness hordes of reporters smoking cigarettes and drinking coffee outside the rooms where the elders met, hoping to grab from the party leaders a word of what was happening.

The exact events of that final night are not known, and various versions are circulating. The *Mainichi Shimbun* published an account which well-informed sources believe to be close to the truth. According to the *Mainichi*, the meeting was in deadlock and the participants were ready to quit, when into the room rushed a Tanaka faction leader, Den Tamura, who proposed splitting the post of party president and premier—a longstanding but little-considered proposal. He suggested the presidency go to Fukuda, and the premiership to Nakasone. By all accounts, everyone at the meeting agreed, including Fukuda and Tanaka-lieutenant Nikaido. Further, it is reported, Tamura said his proposal was being submitted without the knowledge of “Mejiro” (Tanaka’s home and often used as a reference to him).

It would be highly significant if leaders of the Tanaka faction actually acted without the knowledge and consent of the big man himself, for it would indicate the strength of the blow that has already been struck at Tanaka’s power. Indeed, some find this version unacceptable because it implies so great a decline of Tanaka’s power. Another account is circulating in the press which portrays the late proposal as a Tanaka plot, designed to discredit Fukuda by making him appear to grab for power for himself when he was supposed to be playing the role of a non-partisan party elder. Fukuda

has been hurt by the episode, but the fact remains that for a brief moment at least a compromise had been reached. But, a half hour after the initial agreement, Nakasone returned to the bargaining room after having consulted with “someone”—clearly Tanaka. Nakasone at that point nixed the proposed deal.

The election scenario

Should the primary election produce a close result, then the night of Nov. 24 is likely to be the next point of crisis for the LDP. That is the day the primary votes are tabulated, and the day before the runoff election. While—provided that factional loyalties hold—Nakasone has the support of the three mainstream factions and a clear majority of the LDP Diet members, it will be politically risky to impose that majority if one of the other candidates wins a clear primary victory. It is generally assumed—although surprises may be in store—that the top two finishers will be Komoto and Nakasone, with Nakagawa and Abe well behind. Well-informed political analysts think that if the margin of victory is more than 100,000 votes (about 10 percent), then the victor in the primary will become prime minister. However, if Komoto and Nakasone finish more closely, with Nakasone second, it is possible Tanaka will try to force through a Nakasone victory in the Diet vote.

Such an event could well precipitate a deeper crisis in the LDP. There is even talk of a split in the party, though it is still considered a remote possibility. However, reliable sources say that if Nakasone and Tanaka make the steamroller move, it is highly possible that Komoto will leave the LDP in protest. Serious rumors have been reported to this writer by numerous sources, including U.S. embassy observers, that members of the center opposition parties may cast their votes for Komoto in the Diet, should Komoto split the LDP and stand in opposition to the then-newly elected LDP president.



Ichiro Nakagawa



Toshio Komoto



Yasuhiro Nakasone

It is such dangers that are likely to lead to a deal being worked out on the night of the 24th, a deal perhaps imposed by the *zaikai* (business leaders) who have remained broadly neutral in the factional battle but are sure to intervene to attempt to prevent a fracturing of the party. Such a deal, like others discussed during the past week, would apportion cabinet and party positions in advance and when the morning of the 25th arrives, there would be one agreed-upon LDP candidate.

Whatever the result—Komoto or Nakasone—the sharp differences in the party are unlikely to be resolved. The Tanaka faction is in turmoil, and *EIR*'s sources believe the faction will split before the end of 1983. It is already clear that leading figures in the faction, such as Shin Kanemaru and Noboru Takeshita, are maneuvering against Tanaka. In addition, the leadership of the Suzuki faction may also be up for grabs.

By the end of 1983, it is possible that a wholesale reshuffle of the LDP factions will have taken place, with splintering and regrouping of the major factions. A so-called "new generation" of LDP leaders, like Abe and Nakagawa, is straining at the leash, waiting to inherit the leadership—which came close to occurring this time around.

The generally accepted belief in Tokyo is that no matter who becomes prime minister this month, his reign will not last out the next year. That reasoning is based on several anticipated events. The government prosecutor will present his final summation of his request for sentencing to the judge in the Lockheed trial of Tanaka in the spring; in the spring local elections will also take place; in June elections for the upper house of the Diet are scheduled; and in the fall, although it could still be delayed, the final judgement in the Lockheed trial will be made. These events, including anticipated LDP losses in the elections, are expected to force the resignation of whoever is premier.

A more fundamental factor in the stability of the future government will be the degree of decisiveness within the Japanese leadership on the major international problems now confronting Japan. No prime minister of Japan can act forcefully without the indispensable "consensus" among the elite of the country—that is the reality, for better or for worse, of how Japan works. If the Japanese leadership continues to avoid the task of making real decisions about its international economic and foreign policy, then continued political confusion will reign, and "turnstyle" governments will reflect that indecision.

A dangerous lack of consensus, particularly on the issue of relations with Washington, prevails in Japan, a situation not likely to be resolved in the immediate future. "Wait and see" is the watchword, and may be so for two to three years to come, depending, of course, on what happens in the United States. Things may change rapidly, as they have before in Japanese history, but it remains to be seen whether any change will occur in time to help ensure the future of Japan and the rest of the world.

Prof. Aly Mahazeri on Iran's battles against

The following is the address presented to the founding meeting of the Club of Life, in Rome on Oct. 21, by Prof. Aly Mazaheri. An Iranian, he is a specialist in the history of the Orient and is currently giving a course at the École Pratique des Hautes Études et Sciences Sociales in Paris. Professor Mazaheri has authored many books, including The Daily Life of Moslems in the Middle Ages: 10th to 13th Centuries. He has also translated many texts from Arabic including one on the Persian origins of arithmetic.

I have been educated as a Parisian and an academic, but in fact, I belong to Iran. I have been captivated by the ideas of Lyndon LaRouche for a certain time, because I found his teachings to be identical with those of Iranian humanism. Therefore how could I help but join the Club of Life immediately, because the objectives of the Club of Life are the same as those proclaimed by Iranian humanists more than 700 years before Christ. Our fight today against the Club of Rome is a rebirth of a very, very ancient struggle.

I want to state immediately that we must put aside any remnants of pessimism. Pessimism is Satan. It is Satan's disciples who inspire pessimism. I would also like to remind you of the expressions "minority" and "majority," which today only have a quantitative meaning. We must remember that they have a moral meaning, before a quantitative one. We humanists have always been a numerical minority, but in the moral sense, we are the majority. Imagine a classroom, with some thirty to forty schoolchildren, minors, and only one teacher, the only one to be morally of age (major). Humanity has always been governed by a tiny majority and never by the mobs. In May 1968 in Paris, the mobs were being activated to attack those very leaders who had pulled France out of her misery. They dared to say that children should teach teachers in the schools, because the children were in the majority there, because the teachers' ideas were only personal. So the children, morally minors, were set up to oppose their parents, and other adults.

Having said this, I would now like to go into the case of Iran. Iran has fallen, fallen as one of the first victims of monetarist philosophy. In the past, Iran as an historical cultural center, first said "No" to the Assyrians and to the Chaldeans. The philosopher Zarathustra [Zoroaster] was among the first to take up the battle against fatalism, a doctrine taught