Japan’s Internationalization: Becoming a Global Citizen*

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Introduction

The world in the final quarter of the 20th century has been witnessing rapid and massive dissolution of the previously held system of hierarchy in practically all spheres of social life. Whatever else it might have been, the pre-1960 world organization was characterized by an almost monopolistic supremacy of the United States (Pax Americana), with relative decline of Western Europe as a whole and increasing military challenge from the Soviet Union. Today, challenges are also presented by Japan, China, OPEC, the Non-Aligned countries, as well as by newly industrializing countries, in both economic and political terms. In the sociocultural sphere, a significant shift has been taking place from “industrialism” and material advancement to emphasis on spontaneity, affectionate ties between individuals, or in general, what Ron Inglehart termed “post material values” (1977). These trends have generally been perceived as constituting a crisis situation at least inasmuch as they have entailed falling apart of a more or less established “definition of the situation,” regardless of whether that definition was willingly or unwillingly accepted.

Moreover, there is no evidence of a new international order in sight, particularly in terms of economic recovery and of arms race, but also of natural resources. Our question concerns, then, both the extent to which “destructuralization” (a world-wide anomie) has been taking place, on the one hand, and the direction in which “restructuralization” (a new international solidarity) might be going, on the other. In the following pages, I will first reflect on the conditions of a “global community,” as discussed by Talcott Parsons, in search of a broad theoretical framework for more concrete considerations. Secondly, I will discuss the nature of the contemporary crisis, suggesting that there are indeed different kinds of crisis according to different statuses in the international order. Thirdly, in line with Parsons’ argument, a brief rundown of Japanese history of “internationalization” will be given. Finally, a few sug-

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gestions will be made with respect to possible contributions Japan could make in bringing about a new world order.

Emergence of a World Community?

From a macro-sociological point of view, a set of queries as to whether we are witnessing the emergence of a new world system, a new global community, is intriguing. In particular, it invites reconsideration of fundamental methodological issues. Such a concern was raised in the 1960s by Talcott Parsons, representing an early effort in this direction: in two articles (1967; 1969) he proposed that it was legitimate to talk about the emergence, however, rudimentary, of an international order or a “world community” with the principle elements of a social system. He saw concrete signs of institutionalization of normative control over acting units and some coincidence between the realistic cognition of interest and the normative order.

First, there has been considerable development of procedural norms in a variety of fields, such as the regulation of international trade, the conventions which enable the international circulation of persons and information, and the rules concerning conduct on the high seas. Also, the United Nations may be viewed as at least the attempt to establish consensus at the procedural level. Secondly, emergence of a large number of neutral (non-aligned) countries is regarded as relevant to the development of a pluralistic structure of interests, which would prevent the major parties from pushing coercive threats to extremes. Thirdly, ideology (“free world” as well as socialism), while essentially a defensive mechanism, has important positive functions in a world community: it helps to mitigate severe strains inherent in the process of modernization, particularly those prevalent in the “latecomers” trying to catch up with the advanced West.

In a series of lectures given in Japan about two decades after these articles were written, and only a few months before his death, Parsons discussed some further developments in the formation of a world community, while maintaining that there was no hope of what he called a global government in the foreseeable future. The four most important developments were, first, universalization of a scientific-intellectual culture, stemming from the West but which has spread throughout the world; second, English taking root as the world or international language (he was indeed giving his lectures in English, not in Japanese!); third, vastly improved communication and transportation networks; and fourth, firmly established system of world economy, especially around multi-national corporations. He considered these developments, especially the second and the third, both as important signs and as conditions paving the way for the emergence of a world social system. Significantly, the analytical components which other intellectuals think critical for the emergence of a new international order, if something less than global community, are strikingly similar to those Parsons exemplified (Bell, 1980; Dougherty, 1981). First, both they and Parsons agreed that development of means of communica-