

## ABSTRACT

Japan stands alone among the countries of the seven power summit in the exceptional importance which the summit commands in Japanese foreign policy and its domestic economic and political life. As a geographically isolated, defeated world war two country, whose reconstruction was dominated by the United States alone, Japan has looked to the summit institutions as the primary way in which it could diversify its international partnerships beyond its bilateral relationship with the United States and reintegrate itself as a major power into the "western" family of nations. Together with Japan's position as a rapidly growing and internationally vulnerable economy, these forces have led Japan to prepare for the summits in a uniquely thorough and open way, through a process that involves not only the government but also opposition parties, major business groups, and the media. Japan's performance at each summit is also subjected to a uniquely intensive retrospective assessment, and one with an impact on a prime minister's reputation and his party's electoral fortunes.

From the beginning Japan's approach to the summit has centered on two basic priorities: to secure status, legitimacy, and recognition as an equal and full member of the major power "western" club, and to deflect the United States and its summit partners from ganging up on Japan to demand changes in its trade and macroeconomic performance. In addition Japan has always presented itself as the summit's only Asian, non-western member, as the provider of Asian and non-western perspectives, and as the defender of Asian interests. It has also consistently played the role of mediator, stressing the need for summit harmony and accepting national commitments or adjusting national positions to make such harmony possible.

These continuities in Japan's seven-power summit diplomacy have, however, been accompanied by some basic changes, which took effect with accelerating force with the Prime Ministership of Yasuhiro Nakasone (1983-1987) and with the explosion of Japanese economic power in the 1980's. These have centered on an increasing Japanese willingness to convert its rapidly growing relative power into international activism and initiative, if not yet a sustained leadership role. This trend was first evident in Prime Minister Nakasone's willingness to define Japan as a member of the western alliance and accept collective summit positions and obligations in the politico-security sphere. It was also apparent in Japan's more forceful championing of the interests of Asia, the developing world beyond Asia, and the multilateral trade system during the summits of the 1980's.

Nonetheless, by the end of the Venice summit of 1987, seven power summitry had not fundamentally transformed Japan's reactive rather than pro-active stance in macroeconomic diplomacy. It remains to be seen whether Japan can more voluntarily and actively make summitry better serve the smooth functioning of the international political economy as the second seven year cycle of summitry ends and the third begins.