

**A CIGS Special Seminar
with
Professor Ezra F. Vogel
Harvard University
Recent Developments in Trilateral Relations—
the United States, Japan, and China**

Date: Friday, October 30, 2009

Location: Shin-Marunouchi Building 9F (Conference Room #902)

Time: 14:00~16:00

SUMMARY

On October 30, 2009, the Canon Institute for Global Studies (CIGS) had the privilege of welcoming Professor Ezra F. Vogel, who lead a discussion entitled “Recent Developments in Trilateral Relations—the United States, Japan, and China.” It was our honor to host Professor Vogel this year, which marks the thirtieth anniversary of his insightful book *Japan as Number One*.

The following is a brief account of the professor’s speech and the ensuing discussions.

I. Professor Vogel’s Speech

In general, the foreign and domestic policies implemented by the Obama administration have been favorably evaluated by many experts. Yet, there should be much room to be discussed especially over the twin—fiscal and trade—deficits over specific measures. Regarding U.S. relations vis-à-vis Tokyo and Beijing, it should be noted that the new administration has named many experienced China experts spearheaded by Jeffrey Bader, senior director for East Asian Affairs on the National Security Council (NSC). The number of Japan experts, by comparison, has declined. They are led by Daniel Russel who reports to Jeffrey Bader.

Japan’s new administration is currently experiencing a nascent stage, and the United States has unofficially taken a “wait-and-see” stance. However, many observers agree that the Defense Department is unsatisfied, and frustrated with the recent responses on the issue of Futenma from the Hatoyama administration.

The relationship between the U.S. and China has evolved as the two countries, in recent years, engaged in substantial discussions on a wide variety of issues ranging from environmental problems to economic disputes. Inaccurate and misdirected misunderstandings have gradually disappeared on both sides. Recently, China has enthusiastically engaged the U.S. in discussions on the issues of energy and environment. This proactive effort on the part of China reflects how its relationship with the U.S. is that country’s top priority on its foreign policy agenda.

Japan’s affluent living standards have made the Japanese people satisfied with their present lifestyle. As a result, the Japanese have shifted their focus inwards toward domestic issues and lost their interest in current affairs developing abroad.

In the general election that took place on August 30, there was a drastic change in domestic politics; the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) supplanted the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). However, this political change has not been accompanied by an emergence of charismatic statesmen. In the mean time, it should be noted that Mr. Katsuya Okada, a Harvard-educated new foreign minister, is smart and takes to heart a sense of responsibility. Yet, it is still difficult to foresee the course of new U.S.-Japan relations.

II. Summary of the Q&A Discussion

Q1: How can we develop opportunities to have candid discussions with the Chinese?

Prof. Vogel: A continuous two-way exchange of views is absolutely necessary. In the past, many of the candid discussions between the two countries depended on the presence of a third party (especially the U.S.). Now, Japan and China have become accustomed to discuss candidly without the presence of a third party. Between the U.S. and Japan, we have the similar experience. We have gradually developed our discussions over the past years. As for Japan-China relations, we have to be patient. The present Chinese leaders might have little overseas experiences in their younger age due to the Cultural Revolution. Yet, the younger Chinese with their overseas experience can conduct active and candid discussions with their foreign counterparts.

(An opinion from the floor): To be sure, the Chinese do not necessarily reveal their real intentions in public. However, the Chinese are willing to speak privately about their ideas once they come to realize that you are trustworthy. In the case of Japan-China relations, we cannot avoid discussing the historical issues, including the atrocities committed by Imperial Japan. If the Japanese do not face the issue seriously, the Chinese will not engage in serious and candid discussions.

Q2: What are the secrets to China's success during the past thirty years?

Prof. Vogel: First, China's success is the results of the government focusing on economic development in a model that is similar to the development dictatorship adopted by many other Asian countries, including Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore. China adopted a national policy of catching-up economically with a government playing a significant role. This pattern of economic development is in sharp contrast to that of Western countries, where the private sector, rather than the government, developed and modernized their economies. Second, China tried hard to absorb knowledge from abroad to help its economy develop. Deng Xiaoping, as part of his effort to modernize China, improved relations with Japan and the United States in order to encourage investment and technology transfer from the two countries. Third, China benefited from a special characteristic: the presence of overseas Chinese. China served as a lucrative investment destination for this group, and had the additional advantage of sharing the same language, customs, and way of thinking.

Q3: Many Chinese think that political reform is needed to eliminate corruption and fraudulence and to resolve peacefully conflicts of interest within Chinese society. The Chinese Communist Party, on the other hand, tries to maintain a one-party rule. Can this

contradiction be solved? If so, what role can Japan and the United States play to help find a solution?.

Prof. Vogel: Although Deng Xiaoping had been thinking of democratization, he had no choice but to contain the movement when he was faced with mounting social anxieties and the Tiananmen Square Protests of 1989. Deng was forced to choose the stability of the state and abandon the idea of democratization. The future of China, to be sure, has a mounting problem when it comes to democratization. One possible way is to develop the power of the mass media. The media could identify the reality of corruption and fraudulence. In any case, China has a long way to go.

Q4: The rapid expansion of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) might have a huge impact on the U.S. military transformation. Based on this observation, what changes in perspective may emerge regarding the role of the U.S. military bases in Okinawa? What do you think of the future of U.S.-Japan relations if the Japanese administration does not respond properly and swiftly during the next four years?

Prof. Vogel: A mightier PLA would urge Japan to keep American forces on Japanese soil. Without a U.S. military presence, Japan would require a huge military budget to defend itself against the PLA. The negotiations concerning the U.S. military presence in Japan have been taking place for a long time. Japan's abrupt departure from its position in previous discussions would be an inconvenience for the U.S. Having said that, I do not think there's no room for further talks.

Q5: Faced with criticism from the Republican Party and mounting frustration from the Defense Department, will the Obama administration gradually have narrower latitude in its Japan policy?

Prof. Vogel: If the nagging problems surrounding Okinawa are not solved by January 2010, things might become more difficult. I said in the speech that Japan does not necessarily have to solve the problems prior to President Obama's first visit to Japan in November 2009. But it does not mean that Japan has ample time to solve them. From the U.S. perspectives, the Obama administration has to devote resources to the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq; the issues with Japan are not relatively urgent or serious.

Q6: How can Japan change its current domestically oriented stance?

Prof. Vogel: I think there are a growing number of Japanese students who have overseas experience. Also Japan has a large number of people who are concerned with developments abroad. The media should bear its social responsibility to enlighten the nation regarding international affairs. There is a paucity of foreign news coverage in the entire NHK news despite the fact that the NHK is the national public broadcasting institution. The Japanese have to be enthusiastic about collecting knowledge and information. The enthusiastically knowledge-thirsty Chinese might arouse again Japanese people's sense of rivalry.

III. Handout materials at the seminar

Jun Kurihara, CIGS Research Director, *Cambridge Gazette*: Politico-Economic Commentaries No. 2 "Revisiting the Vogelian Japan as Number One."