

## The Legacy of a Weathercock Prime Minister

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**N**AKASONE YASUHIRO is a man with clear goals. By the time he was named prime minister in 1982, he had accumulated 32 notebooks in which he had written the things he would do when he became prime minister. The 35 years since his first election to the House of Representatives in 1947 were, in his own words, "a preparatory period for becoming prime minister."

He is also a man of considerable flexibility, which has inspired the nickname Weathercock. Due partly to his somewhat unorthodox ideas about the Pacific war, the Occupation, and the Peace Constitution, he remained outside the mainstream of conservative politics for many years. His faction (like the factions he be-

longed to in his earlier days) was rather small. Yet his eagerness to become prime minister led him to acquire those skills of maneuvering and manipulation that warrant the nickname.

Nakasone himself does not mind being called a weathercock. On the contrary, he justifies flexibility as an appropriate principle for Japan in the international community of nations. In the May 23, 1983, issue of the weekly *Shūkan Yomiuri*, he is quoted as having said:

What is most important in Japan now is the weathercock. A weathercock's legs are fixed, but its body is very flexible. Thus it can tell the direction of the wind. If its legs are not fixed, it cannot be a weathercock. It is important to have fixed legs and, at the same time, good sense and good judgment. The Greater East Asian War was led by runaway horses that did not have such abilities. Japan needs the attributes of a weathercock if it is to survive despite a vulnerable security system and international economic encirclement. Among the personalities in modern Japanese history, Katsu Kaishū and Saigō Nanshū [Takamori] are the most weathercocklike, in my view. Those who

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