

THE EVOLUTION OF JAPAN'S SECURITY POLICY

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Abstract

Security after the end of the Cold War not only remains as the most vital issue for states, but it has also become a complex phenomenon with the re-emergence of low-intensity and non-specific threats. Many of these threats cannot be adequately handled by means of military power alone and instead require solutions involving the exercise of economic power. These trends suggest that a fresh and innovative approach is required to address the issue of security after the end of the Cold War. Changes in the international security environment in post-Cold War period have also brought new developments to the security situation in East Asia. These changes imply an expanding international peace keeping role for a country like Japan, which is the second largest economy of the world and now stands as a regional and global economic superpower. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the different phases of the development of Japan's security policy. A comparative study of Japanese security policy during and after the end of the Cold War will help understand the changes in security policy. The paper also aims to identify the factors which have made the security policy change inevitable.

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Basic Framework of Post-War Japanese Security Policy

Japanese security policy after the end of World War-II has been influenced by national as well as international factors. The 1947 Constitution, strong public pacifism and domestic politics have been responsible for shaping the Japanese security policy during this period. Article 9 of the Constitution has set the basic framework for Japanese security policy since the end of World War-II. The first paragraph prohibits the possession of armed forces.¹ Because of the existence of Article 9, the Constitution is often called the Peace Constitution.

The present Constitution was written by the American occupation authorities headed by General Douglas Mac Arthur. In the wake of the out- break of Korean War in 1950 and with the departure of American occupied forces to the Korean Peninsula, General Mac Arthur, ordered the creation of a seventy five thousand persons National Police Reserve to fill the security vacuum. This police reserve comprising ground and maritime forces was developed into the Japanese National Safety Forces in August 1952, and eventually into the Ground, Air and Maritime Self Defense Forces following the creation of the Japanese Defense Agency in July 1954².

Determined never to relieve the horror of war, Japan has made every effort to build itself as a peace loving nation since World War-II. Lasting peace is the most earnest wish of the Japanese people and the idea of pacifism is enshrined in the Constitution, Article 9 of which sets forth the renunciation of war, non-possession of war potential and a denial of the right of belligerence of the state. Nonetheless, as long as Japan

remains an independent nation, it is recognized beyond doubt that these provisions do not deny the inherent right of self-defense that Japan is entitled to maintain as a sovereign state. Since the right of self-defense is thus not denied, the government interprets this to mean that the Constitution allows Japan to possess the minimum level of armed strength needed to support the exercise of that right³. On the basis of this understanding, the government has, as part of its exclusively self defense oriented basic policy on national defense under the terms of the Constitution, preserved the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) as an armed organization, continued to equip them and sought to prepare them for operational use.

There are three criteria for exercise of the right of self-defense.

- i) There is an imminent and illegitimate act of aggression against Japan.
- ii) There is no appropriate means to deal with the act of aggression other than by resorting to the right of self-defense.
- iii) The use of armed strength is confined to the minimum necessary level⁴.

However, the use of minimum necessary force to defend Japan is not necessarily confined to the geographic boundaries of Japanese territorial land, sea and air space⁵.

The government nevertheless believes that the Constitution does not permit the dispatch of armed troops to foreign territorial land, sea and airspace for the purpose of using force, because such an overseas deployment of troops would

generally go beyond the limits of the minimum necessary level of self-defense⁶. Until recently, the constitutionality of the Self Defense Forces had been one of the most controversial political issues in Japan. It was ironic that the left wing political forces sympathetic to the communist bloc criticized the existence of the SDF as unconstitutional in the light of Article 9 of the Japan's Constitution, whereas the pro-Western bloc forces in the government had to defend the SDF with great difficulty. Several court battles, as a consequence, were waged over the constitutionality of the SDF as well as the American military presence in Japan. The Japanese judiciary, however, has so far avoided making any legal judgement on the issue. The Supreme Court has ruled out that it is a political matter⁷. Mainichi Daily in its editorial titled "Peace Creating" wrote that "neither the SDF nor Security Treaty would be legal under a strict interpretation of the Constitution"⁸.

In Japan's Parliament, the Diet, a common understanding has evolved about the constitutionality of the SDF through a long history of debates and deliberations. Thus it is understood under Article 9 of the Constitution that Japan is entitled to possess "the minimum level of armed strength" for self-defense purposes, that Japan is not allowed to possess offensive weapons such as intercontinental ballistic missiles, long range bombers, and air craft carriers and that Japan cannot exercise the right of collective self-defense⁹. In the light of these interpretations, one can say that Japan's stated security policy after World War-II has been to maintain an exclusively defense-oriented posture.

The basic strategy of Japan's post-War defense policy was formulated by twice sworn Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru (1946-1947 and 1948-1954). It was the same strategy that was adopted by the Meiji revolutionaries i.e. security could be ensured only through economic power *fukoku*. Economic power in turn depends upon industrial and technological growth. Yoshida thought that Japan should rebuild its industrial and technological strength to lay the solid foundation of its total security. He took full advantage of Security Treaty between Japan and the United States of America signed in September, 1951 which guaranteed "Security of Japan against armed attack from within and without"¹⁰. He left the defense of Japan to the United States and the Japanese government concentrated wholly on the economic reconstruction of the country.

Economic Power and Japanese Security Policy During the Cold War Period

The focus upon the importance of economic power as a component of security policy is not a new phenomenon. The globalisation of trade and investment especially financial markets facilitated by advancements in information technology, has meant that national wealth is manifested increasingly in these intangible components of economic power, which military power is unable to seize, destroy, control, or augment. It is commonly believed today that the security of states and their individual citizens is increasingly determined more by economic vitality and the command of market shares than by the acquisition of national territory and command of raw materials¹¹.

In Japan the tradition of seeing economic power as the foundation of national power and as an instrument of security policy is a relatively old one. The long held conception of Japan as a resource-poor and economically vulnerable country meant that in large part Japanese diplomacy and security policy from the Meiji period until the contemporary era has been driven by the search for economic and technological security¹². Immediately after the World War-II, Japanese policy makers realized that in future Japanese power would have to be expressed through economic rather than military means.

The intellectual and political debate over pacifism was one cogent expression of doubts about the utility of military power for security ends and the Socialist Democratic Party of Japan's (SDPJ) opposition to the existence of the SDF and U.S.-Japan alliance during the Cold War meant that it advocated alternative forms of security including pacifism, neutralism, and economic co-operation¹³. The conservative politicians in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) during this same period, were supportive of the U.S.-Japan alliance and the gradual expansion of Japan's own military defense capabilities but also did not lose sight of the possibilities of economic power in the service of security policy. For instance Yoshida doctrine of Yoshida Shigeru, which laid down the basic path of Japanese diplomacy in the post-War period of maintaining the security alliance with the U.S. whilst Japan concentrated upon economic recovery, did not seek to deny the utility of military power but merely to entrust the role of exercising military power for security purposes to the U.S. But the Yoshida doctrine's emphasis upon rebuilding the Japanese economy and economic growth set in a motion a train of thought

concerning the primacy of economic power that persisted into the 1990s¹⁴.

Concept of Comprehensive Security

The non-military components of security continue to be emphasized in Japan. In the early beginning of 1970s to mid of the decade, the Japanese began to modify their policies. This was partly a reaction to adverse international developments, particularly the oil shocks of 1973, which drove home Japan's vulnerability to events in distant places. Nation's continuing dependence on foreign sources of raw materials is one of the permanent strategic problems that Tokyo faces. The 1973-74 oil crisis heightened Japanese fear of major disruptions of their oil supplies and forced them to seek ways to reduce their vulnerability¹⁵.

Japan's search for "economic security" has included concerted and continuing efforts to reduce tensions in regions vital to its largely economic interests, namely, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. The security and economics are inextricably lined. It has been clear to Japanese officials since early in the modernization process that given its geographical position and resources, the success of Japan's industrialization would depend on access to overseas raw materials especially energy and to overseas markets. As Tokyo gradually realized the limits of its ability to translate its economic expertise into political influence in its efforts to reduce its economic vulnerability in the 1970s, its interest in peacetime defense measures to protect its maritime trade increased.

In part to reduce a feared major disruption of shipping to and from its ports and in part in response to U.S. prodding for greater defense burden sharing, Prime Minister Zenko Suzuki decided in 1981 that Japan should undertake to improve its maritime defense capabilities to protect its sea lanes of communication to a distance of 1,000 nautical miles from its shores. At about the same time, defense policy makers in Tokyo began talking about the possibility of closing Japan's strategic straits (Soya, Tsugaru and Tsushima) against the Soviet Union in times of crises¹⁶.

The search for economic security that had led to problematic consideration of sea-lane and straits defense also generated increasing enthusiasm about the concept of "comprehensive security." The concept of comprehensive security provides a useful framework for examining Japan's security policy. Comprehensive security sought to broaden the traditional military only focus of national security to include economic and political issues as well as to address security at the domestic, bilateral, regional and global levels¹⁷.

The concept first introduced by the end of the 1970s, looks at Japan's security needs in a multi-dimensional and multi-level framework. Since then the concept of comprehensive security became the foundation of official Japanese security policy¹⁸.

Official Development Assistance (ODA) As Economic Instrument of Security Policy

Parallel to the development of the concepts of comprehensive security was a growing recognition that Japan's security and

prosperity contributed to regional and international peace and security and vice versa. It was through development of this awareness and through the discussion of the comprehensive approach to national and international security during the early 1980s that a national consensus emerged on the need to expand Japan's economic assistance as part of Japan's broadly conceived security policy. The consensus held that Japan's economic assistance including what one Western observer has called 'strategic aid' should be considered a part of its contribution to international peace and security¹⁹.

Japan's ODA policies in the 1980s and early 1990s clearly indicated that economic power may be used for security purposes. Ohira and Suzuki, were the first Japanese leaders to link explicitly Japan's economic aid to its security policy. By stating in 1980 and 1981 respectively that in future Japanese ODA would be provided to those "countries bordering areas of conflict," and which were "important to the maintenance of peace and stability in the world"²⁰. Successive Japanese governments in the later stages of the Cold War followed these guidelines for the use of strategic aid by directing ODA to states such as Pakistan, Turkey, and Somalia, which were considered by the U.S. and Japan to be vital to Western security²¹.

By 1989 Japan had surpassed the U.S. to become the largest ODA donor in the world and ODA Great Power²². Furthermore, despite the economic down turn in Japan and the fall in value of the Yen, Japan since the mid-1990s has continued to disburse close to U.S. \$10 billion annually in bilateral ODA and U.S. \$4 billion via multilateral institutions including the Asian Development Bank (ADB)²³. Japan's

expanded ODA clearly indicates that Japanese policy makers firmly believe that ODA constitutes a powerful economic instrument of security policy.

Japan-U.S. Security Treaty as a Corner Stone of Japanese Security

The second most important pillar of the security system of post-War Japan is the United States-Japan Security Treaty. Following the defeat in the Second World War, a broad national consensus emerged in Japan on the nation's immediate goals and priorities. Among Japan's many national objectives, two have been overarching throughout the post-War period: promoting economic growth and prosperity, and ensuring national security. These objectives, of course, hardly make Japan unique. Almost all nations share these objectives. What does make Japan somewhat unique is the broad strategy its leaders adopted to achieve these objectives; to concentrate national energies on expanding foreign markets for Japanese exports while protecting Japanese industries against foreign competition and gaining control over high-value added technologies, critical to Japanese industrial competitiveness, and to minimize military expenditures while relying on the United States to provide Japan's external security.

The United States and Japan signed the United States-Japan Security Treaty on September 8, 1951, which came into effect on April 28, 1952. Under the terms of the 1951 defense pact, the United States possessed the right to use American forces at the request of Tokyo, "to put down large scale internal riots and disturbance in Japan caused through instigation or

intervention by an outside power or powers.” The treaty further states that Japan would not grant, without the prior consent of Washington, military bases to any third power²⁴. United States Japan defense pact of 1951 was replaced with the Treaty of Mutual Co-operation and Security in January 1960. This treaty is often characterized as being asymmetrical, the United States is obligated by this treaty to defend Japan while Japan is not obligated to defend the United States, the United States is granted the right to maintain its bases in Japan for the purpose of contributing to the security of Japan and maintenance of international peace and stability in the Far East, while Japan is not granted similar rights²⁵.

The former asymmetry has clearly resulted from Japan's constitutional limitations i.e. the Japanese government has maintained that the Constitution does not allow Japan to exercise the right of collective self-defense. The United States was indeed able to establish and maintain a hegemonic system of international relations in the postwar period. Japan's national interests were largely defined and persuaded within the framework of the U.S. dominated Western capitalist system. Despite the heated debate and sometimes violent division in Japan over its political and ideological identity in the 1950s and 1960s, the nation's security needs and policies during those decades were largely framed within the confines of the system of U.S. alliances²⁶.

Japan's Security and Reliance on the U.S. Nuclear Deterrent

Since 1958, the development of Japan's Self Defense Forces (SDF) was guided by series of defense buildup plans. The third Defense plan accepted nuclear dependence on the United

States as part of the basic structure of national defense. In 1976, Japan adopted the National Defense Program Outline (NDPO), which defined the nature of Japan's defense capability and prescribed specific goals for the equipment it should possess. In view of the dramatic changes in the International situation including the end of the Cold War however, the former NDPO was reviewed and National Defense Program outline in and after fiscal year 1996 was approved and adopted by the Security Council of Japan and the cabinet in 1995. The outline states that "Japan will depend on America's nuclear deterrent against nuclear threats"²⁷.

In April 1996, the Japan-U.S. joint Declaration was announced by the then Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto and President Bill Clinton. The two leaders reaffirmed in the joint Declaration that the "most effective framework for the defense of Japan is close cooperation on defense between Japan and the United States, based on a combination of an appropriate defense capability of SDF and the Japan-U.S. security arrangements. The U.S. deterrent under the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty remains the foundation of Japan's security"²⁸.

The question that has been frequently raised regarding the U.S. deterrent especially in the post-Cold War is "Is the U.S. nuclear umbrella over Japan still credible"? It is not a new question, since the Japanese and American experts have been debating the answer for many years. The myth of these debates is that the U.S. nuclear umbrella is sufficiently credible in the eyes of Japan's potential opponents to deter nuclear threats. The deterrent will remain credible as long as Japan and the United States maintain common interests and an alliance relationship.

Approach to Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD)

Since the end of the Cold War, Japan and the United States shared the recognition that the proliferation of ballistic missiles is posing a threat to international security²⁹. In December 1998, the Japanese government decided to launch a Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) technology research project jointly with the United States and in August 1999, the Defense Agency of Japan and the U.S. Defense Department signed a memorandum of understanding. The memorandum prescribed the two countries to jointly conduct requirements analysis, design and trial production of certain parts and components³⁰.

At the June 2001 Japan-U.S. summit, the leaders of both countries agreed that the two countries should continue to consult closely on missile defense. The leaders also reconfirmed the importance of co-operative research on Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) technologies that was initiated in 1999. Judgment on transitioning the development and implementation stages of the BMD system will be made after sufficient examination of the feasibility of BMD and the ideal way for Japan's defense to develop in future³¹.

According to an annual Defense Agency report released on 5th August 2003, Japan must accelerate "research and consideration" of ballistic missile defense³². The report calls on the government to beef up national defense in readiness for "more unpredictable" threats such as terrorism and ballistic missile attacks. The report says missile defense systems, particularly the Patriot PAC-3 and sea based systems to be deployed on Aegis ships, are now technically feasible³³. According to the paper, many of the missiles defense system

tests conducted by the United States have been successful. It also says that facing a perceived threat of missile attack from North Korea, the government has shown increasing interest in the Patriot PAC-3 and sea based missile defense systems³⁴.

Conclusion

An overview of developments in Japanese security policy suggests that the concept of Comprehensive Security Policy in which diplomacy, military power and economic power were ascribed equal roles in national security was the first conscious attempt to attach a specific security function to economic power during the Cold-War period. In the post-Cold War period also policy makers have continued to view economics as one of the central components of security policy. Japan's expanded Official Development Assistance (ODA) program clearly indicates that Japanese policy makers believe in making best use of the economic tools of security policy. The U.S.-Japan Security Treaty remains crucial for Japan's national security but as threat perceptions become increasingly divergent, it becomes necessary for Japan to make autonomous efforts to defend its territory. A comprehensive national security policy is basic to Japan's national security and its national security should be secured by means of integrated use of its political, diplomatic, economic, defense and other national resources.

References and Notes

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¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Graig A. Synder, "Regional Security Structure", in Graig A. Synder, (ed), *Contemporary Security and Strategy*, Macmillan Press Ltd., London, 1999, p.113.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Tsuneo Akaha, op.cit, p.161.

²⁰ Christopher W. Hughes, op.cit, p.23.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Akeneya Tatsuo, *op.cit*, p.178.

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²⁶ Tsuneo Akaha, *op.cit*, p.148.

²⁷ *Defense of Japan 2000*, *op.cit*, p.70.

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³² *The Japan Times*, Tokyo, 6.8.2003.

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³⁴ Ibid.