JAPAN'S EMERGING GLOBAL ROLE IN THE POST COLD-WAR PERIOD

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ABSTRACT

Japanese security policy during the Cold- War period has been influenced by a number of factors. The 1947 Constitution, strong public pacifism and domestic politics have been responsible for shaping the Japanese security policy during this period. An important change has occurred in Japan's security policy in the post-Cold War era. Popular thinking is changing in Japan. During the Cold War period there was a general perception that the country should have minimum defense capability to protect and defend its territory. In the post Cold-War period, there is domestic and international demand for greater Japanese contribution to international security. This paper examines Japan's emerging global role and focuses on the shift in Japanese security policy in the post-Cold War period.

PRESSURES FOR A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN WORLD AFFAIRS

Following the centuries of self-imposed isolation from global politics, in the middle of the nineteenth century, a group of new Japanese leaders, launched Japan on a modernization drive aimed at strengthening the country and preserving its political sovergenity. The Meiji Restoration (1868) opened Japan to broader international trends, including new technologies as well as unfamiliar principles of economic and political organization. U.S. naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan, (1840-1912) recognized in these developments the rise of a new power, capable of challenging the previously dominant Western nations.[1]

Occupying an honourable place in the international community was an aspiration of the Japanese people even before the 1952 Constitution was written. Since 1952, Japan's desire to be accepted as a full-fledged member of the international community

has been reflected in its membership in international institutions such as the United Nations and its various international agencies. Japan is also playing a more influential role in institutions such as the International Monitory Fund (IMF) and the World-Bank. This is not at all surprising, given Japan's position in the international economic hierarchy and the Japanese people's long standing interest in multi-lateral organizations. Japan is also interested in attaining a prominent position on the U.N Security Council. It is important to note how ever, that there are internal debates in Japan on the international stance that the country should take.

In 1988 Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita, announced the "International Co-operation Initiative," listing three foreign policy areas that Japan would emphasize as important parts of its global responsibility: cooperation for world peace, quantitative and qualitative improvement of official development assistance, and the promotion of international cultural exchange.[2]. This initiative reflected growing awareness within the government that Japan should assume a greater responsibility in the international community. The initiative was welcomed by Japanese as well as by foreigners. The debate continued and the scope of discussions expanded with the passage of time. The Japanese now debate not only Japan's peace and security role but Japan's global strategy as well.

The Japanese government prepared a Peace Keeping Operations (PKO) bill that the Diet finally adopted in June 1992. Former Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa established a special study group within the LDP to review Japan's role in the international community and to work out a new vision. Business groups such as Keizai Doyukai also took up this issue. The Yumori Shimbun organized a panel of intellectuals to discuss Japan's international contribution from a constitutional point of view[3].

THE GULF CRISIS AS A TURNING POINT

The Gulf crisis of 1991 sparked heated domestic debate about Japan's role in the international community, particularly

regarding world peace and security. It was its pacifist constitution that had hindered the Japanese government from fully participating in international crisis management, and which continues to prohibit the use of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces for purposes other than self-protection. Even though the Japanese government granted enormous financial support amounting to $13 billion, the measure was ridiculed as cheque book diplomacy[4].

The lack of any respect paid by the international community to the efforts of Japan was traumatic for the Japanese people and it led to the feeling that Japan should respond positively to security operations conducted with the co-operation of the international community. Intellectuals in particular were disappointed by the Japanese government's indecisiveness to the crisis and were seriously concerned to reconsider Japans's role in assuring world peace and stability.

In fact Japan had a great deal at stake in the conflict. International law and order are fundamental underpinning of Japan's own peace and security. Furthermore Japan depends heavily on oil imports from the Gulf. Indeed Japan's vital interests were and continue to remain very much at stake[5].

Japan's security policy took a giant leap forward after the Gulf crisis. Traditionally, the Japanese government was extremely reluctant to assign the Self-Defense Forces with tasks other than the protection of its own territory. But on 15 June 1992, Japan passed the International Peace Co-operation Law, which allowed Japanese forces to take part in UN peacekeeping activities[6].

Japanese forces though not allowed to participate in direct combat, the Maritime Self Defense Forces are now permitted to dispatch vessels to the Indian Ocean and play a role in logistics and other spheres in cooperation with the military operations being conducted by the United States and its allies in Afghanistan[7].

The Gulf War posed a severe dilemma for Japan. How could it shoulder international security responsibilities in ways that were broadly compatible with the dominant view of the Japanese public that an expanded security role for Japan was undesirable? Pressed and prodded by the United States government to participate in the American-led coalition's military efforts in any way that was possible for Japan given its constitutional and political constraints, the Japanese government stumbled.[8]

The government was divided on the issue of Japan's participation in the coalition's military activities. One camp headed by Ichiro Ozawa, Secretary General of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), wanted to go ahead and let the SDF participate in the multinational force, at least at the level of the non-combatant actions allowed by the "broadened" interpretation of the constitution and the Self Defense Forces law. This camp included LDP politicians who had been former Directors General of the Defense Agency and members of the party's defense committee and was supported by a small but steadily increasing segment of the public who believed generally in a stronger defense policy and particularly in the crucial need to respond to the evident wishes of the United States government by participating in the anti-Iraq Alliance.

The other camp was headed by Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu and supported by many officials in the economic ministries, by major business leaders and most importantly, by more than two-thirds of the public.[9] This group wanted Japan's support to be confined to non-military activities such as financial contribution to the United States and the member countries of the Gulf-co-operation council as well as to those countries severely hit by the Gulf War like such as Jordan and Turkey. This conflict ended with the defeat of the former camp when United Nations' Peace Keeping Operations bill was passed by the Diet in the Autumn of 1990.

In the case of the dispatch of Self-Defense Force minesweepers to the Gulf in 1991-92, the Japanese government explained that the sweeping of mines following a war was a peaceful activity rather than an exercise of military power and that the self-defense law itself provided for assuming the safety of sea lanes navigated by Japanese ships. Thus without enacting any new rules, the government was able to effect a change in the policy in the form of a change in interpretation of the law permitting the mobilization of the self-defense forces abroad.

The Self Defense Forces thus began their transformation from forces devoted strictly to assuring Japans' own defence within the framework of the constitution, to forces that could share the tasks of assuring international security. Similarly in case of U.S.-led war against Iraq in 2003, the Defense Agency started deliberations on whether to train Ground Self Defense Forces troops to fight guerillas and terrorists and dispatch them along with other GSDF personnel to Iraq.[10]

After postponing the decision to send forces to Iraq for three times, Japan finally ordered to send 600 forces of ground troops to Iraq in January 2004, for non-combatant, humanitarian and reconstruction purposes[11]. In terms of PKO activities, Japan also dispatched a 680-member Ground Self Defense Force engineer group and 10 PKF head quarter's personnel to engage in the PKOs in East Timor, at the request of the United Nations[12]. Those efforts constitute Japan's largest ever personnel contribution to a UNPKO.

In response to domestic and international expectations that Japan should make a more active contribution to global peace efforts, a part of the International Peace Co-operation law was revised on 14 December 2001[13] The revision lifted the ban on Japan's full-scale participation in the Peace Keeping Forces' (PKF) main activities, thus expanding the extent of Japan's international co-operation.

Thus, it was the Gulf War of 1990-91 which provoked a measure of re-thinking about Japan's international security role. Since then the political mood in Japan has been steadily swinging towards support for a more active security role. Changes in popular perception reflecting changes in the security environment of Japan and the rising expectations of the SDF have helped to push for a review of Japan's defence posture in the post-Cold War period.

CHANGES IN JAPANESE PUBLIC OPINION

QUESTION ASKED	RESPONSE	% OF RESPONDENTS	YEAR
SDF's involvement in overseas disaster relief operations	Approve or tend to approve	54.2	1990
SDF's involvement in UN PKO	Approve or tend to approve	78.5	2002
Dialogue and exchange with foreign defence officials	Approve or tend to approve	45.5	1990
	Approve or tend to approve	70.2	2002
	Approve or tend to approve	72.8	2002

Opinion poll conducted by the Cabinet Office in 2002. Showing that popular understanding of the importance of the SDF's role has deepened.

Source: *East Asian Strategic Review 2005,* The National Institute for Defense Studies Japan.

CHANGES IN JAPANESE PUBLIC OPINION

QUESTION ASKED	RESPONSE	% OF RESPONDENTS	YEAR
Do you think there are threats to the security of Japan?	There are threats to the security of Japan	86.5	2002

Opinion poll conducted by Foreign Office in March 2002, showing that Japanese people are keenly aware of new threats.

Source: *East Asian Strategic Review 2005,* The National Institute for Defense Studies Japan.

CHANGES IN JAPANESE PUBLIC OPINION

QUESTION ASKED	RESPONSE	% OF RESPONDENTS	YEAR
Was BMD System necessary	Yes	67	2005

Opinion poll conducted by the Asahi Shimbun on February 19-20-2005.

Source: *East Asian Strategic Review 2005,* The National Institute for Defense Studies Japan.

In view of the relative decline of military power to economic power in an interdependent world, different schools of thoughts in international relations i.e. Realists, Liberals and Marxists share a common assumption that it is possession of the economic power, which is decisive factor in determining the rise to predominance of states. This leads to a debate among scholars from the field of International Relations and International Political Economy (IPE) regarding the future security role of Japan as a global civilian power. According to this concept, it would be more rational for Japan to seek to contribute to international security primarily by means of economic power.[14]

Whether Japanese policy makers create a viable security policy based primarily on economic rather than military power or a policy which at least carefully balances economic and military power in a comprehensive approach, it will have far reaching implications for regional and global security in the post-Cold War period.

JAPAN'S GLOBAL DISARMAMENT POLICY

Being the only country to have experienced nuclear attacks, Japan firmly believes that nuclear weapons should never be used again. From this stand point, Japan strictly adheres to its three non-nuclear principles. At the same time, Japan maintains that global nuclear disarmament and the ultimate elimination of all nuclear

weapons will not be achieved by simply advocating the conventions on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons. Japan believes that continuous, realistic steps, such as sterenous negotiations for a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and the promotion of dialogue to faster confidence-building, are indispensable for attaining the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons. Japan ratified the Nuclear-Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1970 and signed it in 1982, placing itself under the obligation, as a non-nuclear weapons state, not to produce or acquire nuclear weapons.[15]

In order to demonstrate a more realistic approach to nuclear disarmament, Japan on 18 November, 1994 tabled a resolution which refers to the NPT, the central pillar of the non-proliferation regime. Three weeks later, on 15 December, the resolution was adopted by the plenary meeting of the UN General Assembly with a great majority.[16]. This was Japan's first independent resolution calling for nuclear disarmament.

By continuing to insist for nuclear disarmament, Japan helps to preserve a climate, which allows the NPT to continue. It was Japan, which brought a reluctant China to a broad acceptance of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.[17] In the early 1980s, Japan wanted to sell civilian nuclear power plant equipment to China, which was keen to acquire Japanese equipment and technology. Japan managed to persuade China to accept the principles of confining international nuclear proliferation to peaceful ends through agreed International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and to adhere to the associated international agreements. As a result, China joined the IAEA in January 1984 and in March 1984 Japan and China signed a memorandum on the sale of a Japanese pressure vessel for China's planned Qinshan civilian nuclear power plant.[18]

CONCLUSION

The increasing demands for Japan to assume more global responsibilities, in conjunction with the international and domestic

opposition .to such steps has led Japanese policy to move in a zigzag manner. The reasons for such fluctuations in Japanese foreign policy lie in the domestic impediments to an activist policy. Firstly, the pacifist tendencies that grew out of Japan's experiences in World-War II are still working. Secondly, domestic vested interests oppose taking any steps that might undermine economic prosperity at home. Consequently it is difficult for Japan to move quickly to shoulder new international responsibilities. Instead, Japan tends to move incrementally. For example, it might attempt to develop a broader or more flexible interpretation of the constitution. Thus a consensus is required which would seek to incorporate on as many divergent positions as possible. However the pressures on Japan to play a greater role in world affairs are beginning to overwhelm the countervailing obstacles and Japan is expected to play more active role internationally in the future than it has in the past.

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