Japan's Search for Strategic Vision : The Contemporary Debate*

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Introduction

Japan's dramatic postwar ascent as an economic superpower has not been accompanied by a comparable rise in its international political and strategic weight. This much-noted phenomenon has given rise in recent years to growing discussions among Japan's opinion leaders and opinion elites over what the nation's international role should be.[1] Similar in many ways to earlier American "Great Debates" just prior to World War II, at the outset of the Cold War, and during the Vietnam War, Japan's recent public dialogues are symptomatic of a nation confronting momentous change in its international role and responsibilities.

Lending added urgency to the dialogue are two external forces which together challenge virtually the entire foundation of Japan's postwar international stance : the demise of the Cold War and the perceived relative decline of the United States. Occurring separately, either phenomenon would trigger a broad rethinking of Japan's international posture. Occurring nearly simultaneously, they have called into question the core axioms that have guided Japanese foreign policy since 1945.

For four decades after its defeat and occupation in World War II Japan's international position was circumscribed by its patron-client relationship with the United States. Shielded by the American security guarantee, inhibited by fears of revived militarism both at home and among its Asian neighbors, and obliged to defer to U.S. political and strategic leadership under the rigors of the Cold War, successive Japanese leaders clung to the essential elements of the Yoshida Doctrine. Named after Shigeru Yoshida, Prime Minister on two occasions between 1946 and 1954, the strategy called for Japan to keep a low profile on contentious international issues and focus the nation's prodigious energies instead on economic pursuits. If political and military engagement were equated with conflict, suffering; and humiliation, economic undertakings seemed to provide a legitimate and peaceful channel for Japanese talents. Postwar necessity thus became enshrined as national self-concept. For two generations of Japanese, foreign policy has been virtually synonymous with foreign economic policy.

If during the four decades of the Cold War it had been generally sufficient for Japan to

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cooperate with the American-led effort to contain the Soviets and to otherwise maintain a determinedly a political low profile on divisive world issues, by 1990 it was apparent that the familiar fixed compass points from which Japanese diplomacy had taken its bearings were largely gone. The end of the Cold War meant that the U.S.-Japan security relationship had lost much of its rationale. In some ways the centerpiece of the bilateral relationship, the security link had allowed Japan to avoid most of the cost of providing for its own security and had generally blunted the anxieties over revived Japanese militarism that pervade much of Asia as well as the broadly pacifist Japanese population. Now that familiar security arrangement would either have to develop a post-Cold War rationale for its continued existence or would gradually atrophy into irrelevance, leaving perhaps the outward shell of formal agreement but a hollowed-out reality of declining U.S. force presence and diminished joint operational activity.

Added to the receding political and security verities of the Cold War was the spectacle of a seemingly once-invincible America reeling under the weight of mounting domestic ills, including unmanageable budget deficits, overconsumption, underinvestment, declining educational standards, drugs, crime, the erosion of traditional values, and a dangerous decline in the public's confidence in its political leaders and institutions. To a hierarchically-minded Japan that had found much to admire about postwar America, the spectacle of its apparent decline was deeply unsettling. However exaggerated it may be in some quarters, the growing belief in Japan that the once-supreme United States was undergoing a steady erosion of strength and coherence lent added urgency to Japan's debate over its own international role.

The Impact Of The Persian Gulf Crisis

That debate, well along by 1990, was accelerated by the Persian Gulf crisis of 1990-91. Throughout the seven months bounded by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990 and the U.S.-led defeat of Iraq in February 1991, Japanese political and intellectual life was convulsed by an intense debate over the nation's appropriate role in the crisis. Left undisturbed by external crisis, Japan's broad rethinking of its global role would have proceeded at an exceedingly slow and deliberate pace due to two traits of Japanese society : the ingrained desire for broad consensus reached through comprehensive participation and, secondly, the traditional absence of commanding public leadership inclined to promote architectonic vision from the top down. However, the eruption of the Persian Gulf crisis in August 1990 found a Japan that was still in the early stages of consensus-building through its newly-begun national debate and without constitutional or statutory mechanisms for dispatching its uniformed personnel to foreign hot-spots.

Lacking an agreed concept of national purpose in the post-Cold War environment and hampered by the exceptionally weak leadership of Prime Minister Kaifu,[2] Japan entered a seven-month ordeal of tepid measures, false starts, and arcane debate that did little to enhance its image as a major power.

Kaifu began firmly enough, halting oil imports from Iraq and Kuwait and suspending all commercial relations with Iraq on August 5. [3] In late August the Government pledged that 100-200 medical personnel would be sent to the Gulf as the first step in a more comprehensive contribution. [4] A week later $1 billion was pledged to support the multinational coalition and front-line states, an amount raised to $4 in late September. [5]

For Japan's leaders, opinion elites, and general public, matters would become much more complex and divisive as the nation tried to move beyond its competent initial measures and attempt to formulate a more robust presence in the U.S.-led coalition. At the end of September 1990 Kaifu unveiled his proposed United Nations Peace Cooperation Corps, a mechanism for Japanese personnel to participate in the coalition in non-combat support roles. In succeeding weeks deliberations

became mired in arcane disputes over the legal permissibility of including elements of the Self Defense Forces in the proposed corps. [6] Symptomatic of the debate were protracted discussions of whether overseas deployment of unarmed SDF forces would constitute merely the sending of personnel **(haken)** or the constitutionally-suspect dispatch of troops **(hahei)**. By early November Kaifu was forced to withdraw the U.N. Peace Cooperation Bill in the face of certain Diet rejection.[7] In late January 1991, with the war to liberate Kuwait well underway, the Government pledged to secure Diet approval of an additional $9 billion to the allied effort.[8]

Not until late April 1991, more than two months after the conclusion of the allied drive to expel Iraq from Kuwait, did Japan dispatch four minesweepers to the Persian Gulf. The dispatch was by this point largely of symbolic import, an effort by the Government of Japan to be perceived as an active participant in the international coalition and thus to avoid the potential international isolation and rejection that is a source of chronic Japanese anxiety.[9]

The Government's handling of the issue was not an inspiring performance. Japan's conspicuous place on the sidelines prompted broad international criticism. "Where's the New (Superpower,?" taunted NEWSWEEK in its August 27, 1990 issue, expressing a widely-held sentiment. Largely unrecognized amid the apparent public relations debacle, however, was the fact that the Gulf Crisis intensified the broader national debate already underway on Japan's future international role. Competing paradigms advanced by Japan's opinion leaders were brought into sharp relief amid the Gulf debate. Japan's opinion leaders from the media, think tanks, business circles, universities, political parties, and legislative and bureaucratic elites advanced five competing schools of thought regarding Japan's role in the Gulf: the Minimalists, who urged Japanese autonomy from the United States and minimal participation in the U.S.-led effort; the Realists, who argued that the Gulf crisis required Japan to wield greater international clout due to the imperatives of the state system; the Moralists, who advocated a policy of activism grounded in ideological precepts; the Utilitarians, who saw the crisis as an occasion for Japan to enhance its international stature; and the Bilateralists, who urged robust Japanese efforts in order to strengthen the key relationship with the United States.[10]

Japan's awkward efforts to craft an appropriate role for itself in the Persian Gulf crisis yielded two principal effects. First, the Gulf war greatly intensified Japan's broader debate over its proper international role. The vitality, richness, and thoughtfulness of the debate were readily apparent. Note that four of the five schools of thought called for Japan to accept substantially greater international burdens. Only one, the Minimalists, preferred a continued peripheral role for Japan. Given that opinion polls routinely reflect a mass public whose international views are unusually insular by world standards, it is not surprising that Japan's opinion leaders had only a modest short-term impact on national policymakers and the mass public.

Deeply rooted habits of mind, including those of ethnocentrism and an aversion to firm national stands on contentious international issues, present a challenging environment for the kind of sophisticated analyses and informed policy preferences advanced by most opinion leaders. Similarly Japanese political leaders have traditionally paid relatively little attention to foreign policy issues, focusing instead on the personalist and pork-barrel character of factional politics within the Diet. Despite its intellectual merits, then, the vigorous foreign policy debate conducted by Japan's elites had little evident immediate effect during the Gulf crisis itself.

The second effect of the Gulf crisis for Japan has been a postwar effort to address some of the principal critiques and prescriptions so ably articulated by the opinion leaders' debate. Efforts are currently underway to remedy long-standing concerns about both Japan's foreign policy process and its much-criticized image as a check-writing conscientious objector in the maintenance of international order.

In the crisis' aftermath, there has been renewed interest in reforming and strengthening the

foreign policy decisionmaking structure. The problem is two-pronged: an overworked, understaffed foreign ministry and the absence of effective interagency mechanisms.

Japan's foreign ministry is by far the smallest of any of the major industrialized nations. Its 4,300 officers contrasts sharply with, say, Britain's 8,200 or the U.S. State Department's 16,000 foreign service officers.[11] Japan's career diplomats are simply unable to keep pace with the mounting volume and complexity of their work load. "The Ministry is in chaos," argues Nihon University's Motofumi Asai, himself a former career diplomat. He adds, "the officers are concerned with day-to-day routine, spending little time to collect and analyze intelligence, to engage in research and to work in long-term planning." [12] While some of the attention now being paid to bureaucratic deficiencies smacks of political scapegoating, the most likely result will be increased investment in the foreign ministry's budget and professional personnel.

The problem of interagency gridlock has long existed in Japan and was particularly apparent throughout the Gulf crisis. The National Security Council, composed of cabinet ministers and chaired by the prime minister, lacks the institutionalized staff expertise of its American counterpart and, in any case, was never convened until actual hostilities were underway in the Gulf. The Cabinet Secretary, Misoji Sakamoto at the time, is the prime minister's liason with the individual ministries and is expected to faciliate interagency coordination, but his influence is only as strong as that of the prime minister he serves. The much-noted political frailities of Prime Minister Kaifu thus undercut Sakamoto's ability to forge interagency consensus on Japan's Gulf policy.

The Government's weak performance has stimulated efforts to reform the overall foreign policy process. A government council on administrative reform has recommended a strengthening of the prime minister's interagency apparatus and the creation of a unified command center for crisis management.[13]

Beyond matters of process, Japan is rethinking its 45-year long aloofness from international peacekeeping and conflict resolution efforts. The most tangible expression of that rethinking was the proposal before the Diet to permit up to 2,000 members of the Self Defense Forces to be dispatched overseas for United Nations-sponsored peacekeeping operations The September 9 1991 agreement by the opposition Komeito and Democratic Socialist parties to back the ruling Liberal Democratic Party proposal appeared to ensure the eventual adoption of the measure in some form.[14] The bill did indeed pass the House of Representatives on December 3, 1991.[15] Later in the month, however, the interparty coalition dissolved in the House of Councillors, leaving the historic piece of legislation as well as the political future of newly-installed Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa shrouded in doubt.

There can be little doubt that the growing consensus that "Japan must do more internationally" was solidified by the broad criticism directed at Japan for its aloof image in the Gulf crisis. Japan's $13 billion contribution to the allied cause-- $11 billion to support the military coalition and $2 billion to aid states near the fighting-- made Japan the allies' fourth largest financial supporter, ranking behind only the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. Its large contribution was financed with the help of a $5 billion tax hike adopted by the Government. Yet the hesitant, reactive character of its support and its refusal to send personnel to assist the multinational effort against Iraq led to broad international criticism rather than praise of Japanese efforts.

Surely never before has a nation contributed so much and received so little credit in return. In March 1991 two events further clarified Japan's unpopularity among its allies. A WASHINGTON POST-ABC NEWS poll showed that 30% of Americans said they had lost respect for Japan because of the Gulf crisis, while only 19% said their respect for Japan had increased. Then the Kuwaiti government published a full-page ad in the NEW YORK TIMES to thank members of the U.N. coalition for restoring Kuwaiti sovereignty. Japan was conspicuously absent from the list of countries named in the ad.[16]

The first major crisis of the post-Cold War era thus left Japan smarting over what it saw as the world's lack of understanding of its efforts. To a nation chronically anxious about what the rest of the world thinks of it, the experience was a singularly painful and bitter one. The Gulf crisis marked a major turning point in Japan's relations with the outside world. Its most immediate legacy was to intensify the debate among Japanese opinion leaders and policy elites over the nation's appropriate international role.

Regionalism Versus Bilateralism

That debate has recently revolved around a broad reexamination of the fundamental orientation of Japanese foreign policy. Simply put, the debate centers on which axis is most crucial to Japan's future: the bilateral axis linking Japan in a global partnership with the United States or the regional axis linking Japan and the rest of Asia.

1. The Regionalists. Japan's disastrous attempt at regional hegemony under the rubric of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere has cast a long shadow. As Yoichi Funabashi of the ASAHI SHIMBUN has recently observed, "its failure created profound political and psychological inhibitions for Japan. Whenever Japan tried to assert itself and assume a regional leadership role, Asian leaders recalled its culpability in the Second World War and repeatedly warned of its 'new ambition' and aspiration toward becoming a 'military giant' once again."[17]

However, recent strains in U.S.-Japan relations combined with the emergence of regional economic groupings in Europe and North America have stimulated a growing call for Japan to regard its regional role in Asia as its principal foreign policy focus. Among those advocating a policy of regionalism is Professor Tatsumi Okabe of Tokyo Metropolitan University. The author of a number of books on Asia, Professor Okabe argues that "the central task for Asia-Pacific cooperation is to carry out smoothly the adjustment of industrial structrues, or the establishment of a division-of-labor structure, based on comparative superiority."[18] Though emphatically rejecting arrangements that would exclude non-Asian participation, it is clear that Okabe believes a regional structure "based on comparative superiority" would be a Japan-centric one.

Similarly, the influential business leader, Yotaro Kobayashi, has urged Japan's "re-Asianization." Asia, he argues, is Japan's natural "home." He has proposed that Japan explore the role of regional "co-chairman" with China.[19] While advocating continued close ties with the united States, Kabayashi urges Japan to "foster close ties with the rest of Asia and be prepared to play a central role" in the region's affairs.[20]

Echoing Kobayashi's themes is the commentator Naoki Tanaka, formerly chief of the economic forecasting section of The Research Institute of National Economy. Tanaka laments the fact that "since the end of World War II, Japan has not participated in any plan that would significantly alter the political map of Asia."[21] Insisting that there is a "need for Japan's active participation in building an Asian political and diplomatic order," Tanaka asserts that "we are starting to move far beyond the simple theme of 'whither Japanese money ?'"[22] If economics provides the basis of Japan's stature in Asia, the very magnitude of its economic stature and interests require it to wield power in ways that transcend economic issues alone. "Japan's great economic potential for creating order leaves it no choice but to participate in building a political order" in the region, concludes Tanaka.[23]

Calls for Japanese geopolitical strategy to focus on Asia seek to bring diplomatic practice into line with emergent economic reality. Recent years have seen an extraordinary surge in Japanese direct investment in the region, especially in Southeast Asia. Between 1988 and 1990, for example, Japan's direct investment in the six nations of Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia totalled $17.6 billion. In the same period, U.S. firms invested $ 4.6 billion in the six countries.[24] 1990 marked the 14th consecutive year that Japanese companies invested more in the dynamic economies of Asia than U.S. companies did.

According to NEWSWEEK, "over the last five years corporate Japan has poured $26.8 into Asia's eight fastest-growing economies. (compared with $7.4 billion for the United States), while Japanese government overseas development assistance kicked in an additional $10 billion."[25] It is little wonder that, as a Japanese diplomat posted in Sountheast Asia put it, "Japan and Japanese companies view Asia as their sphere of influence."[26] Indeed, it would be surprising were it otherwise. According to David Sanger of the NEW YORK TIMES,

> **The most remarkable change wrought by the Japanese is what they have built over the last six years-- at a cost of more than $25 billion, three times what the United States has spent in the same period. Piece by piece, corporate Japan has created a startling replica of itself. ... As a result, a region that only 15 years ago was seen by the United States as on the brink of communism has instead embraced a decidedly capitalist model-- but capitalism Japanese-style.**[27]

The stakes for Japan in this strategic focus are enormous. As Sanger puts it:

> **In their more candid moments, Japanese officials say that how they harness Asia's talent and energy in the next few years determine whether, in the early part of the next century, Japan's economy overtakes that of the United States. For them, Asia is the critical cog in the machine, a cure for Japan's shortage of talented labor and inexpensive land, a way to free up Japan's resources for more profitable, researchoriented work at home.**[28]

Given the economic significance of Asia to Japan's strategic future, the question arises as to how Japan can best wield influence in the region. Three competing paradigms for doing so have been advanced and debated by Japan's opinion elites. They are (1) Japan as Asia's voice in the councils of the Western industrial democracies, (2) Japan as active participant in regional security arrangements, and (3) Japan as the hub of an Asian regional economic grouping.

Representative of the first strategic concept is Mr. Tadao Chino, the influential Finance Ministry's Vice Minister for International Financial Affairs. Upon assuming his new position in July 1991, he proclaimed a strategy of Japan using its position in the ranks of the G-7 nations to "draw the world's attention to Asia. ... Asia has more potential power than other areas."[29] Declaring himself "pro-Asia," Chino declared that "it is Japan's role to raise Asian economic power, and the improvement of the Asian area is important for Japan and the world."[30] In a similar vein, the daily NIHON KEIZAI editorialized in late 1991 that "Japan will push policy coordination between Asia and the U.S.-- this is Japan's task in the Asia-Pacifi region."[31]

The second regionalist paradigm focuses on the creation of an Asian security framework and the insistence that Japan find a way actively to participate in the maintenance of regional security. Advocates of this line of reasoning include Koji Kakizawa, a prominent member of the House of Representatives and director of the National Defense Division of the Liberal Democratic Party. To Kakizawa, it is imperative that Japan "contribute to peace in Asia" by participating in "an Asian U.N. peacekeeping force" made up of "military contingents of various Asian countries."[32]

Two aspects of Kakizawa's proposal are noteworthy. First, though not explicitly calling for the abrogation of the U.S.-Japan security relationship, Kakizawa ignores it altogether, suggesting that it is largely irrelevant to the emphatically regional focus he advocates. "Modern weaponry makes membership in a collective security system essential to deter military aggression. This is vital for the security of Japan as well as for the sake of promoting peace and security in the region," he argues.[33] Clearly, Kakizawa's worldview downgrades, if it does not eliminate altogether, the significance of the U.S.-Japan security link in the

course of promoting an Asian security framework with active Japanese participation.

Secondly, Kakizawa is not one to let the burdens of history stand in the way of Japan's assuming a robust role in Asian security arrangements. "It is true," he writes, " that China and South Korea remain somewhat concerned about a Japanese military role." However, concludes Kakizawa, Japan should not "indulge too much in self-castigation over the past and in exaggerated self restraint."[34]

Echoing Kakizawa's essential theme is Tatsuro Kunugi, a former U. N. official and currently a professor at International Christian University. Kunugi argues that "until very recently, all debates on what role Japan should play in Asia have been conducted largely within the framework of economics. However, in a world where economic strength is becoming increasingly politicized, we have to consider the Japanese role also from the perspective of peace and security. Maybe we cannot avoid...discussing the military aspect."[35] To Kunugi, Japan's growing influence in the region conincides with "the gradual retrenchment of the U.S. military presence in Asia."[36] Kunugi, like Kakizawa, believes that Japan's military contribution to the maintenance of Asian regional stability will best occur through "participation fully in U.N. peacekeeping activities."[37]

Japan's first tentative steps towards providing leadership on regional security came during the July 1991 Kuala Lumpur meeting of the six ASEAN nations plus seven nations outside the region. Japan's Foreign Minister Nakayama proposed the institutionalization of an annual forum on regional security matters at which ASEAN and other interested parties could exchange views on the region's security requirements. Innocuous though the proposal appeared to be, it met with a decidedly cool response from the ASEAN states. As the ECONOMIST put it, "he reckoned without the memories still alive in some of Japan's once-occupied territories. The idea of Japan seeking a greater security role in the region was enough to ring alarm bells all over the Pacific.[38] Similarly, the editors of the NIHON KEIZAI noted that even though "the Japanese government has repeatedly announced that it has no intention of becoming a military big power," it is understandable that ASEAN's "sense of guardedness against Japan's iniatitive is deep-rooted" due to Japan's past record of militarism and conquest.[39]

Certainly any attempt by Japan to play a larger role in the main- tenance of Asian regional security will meet with stiff resistance for the forseeable future. For Japan itself, such a role would entail the repudiation of the long-standing Fukuda Doctrine announced in Manila in August 1977 by Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda. According to the doctrine, Japan (1) would never become a major military power, (2) would promote constructive non-military ties with the members of ASEAN, and (3) would act to promote cooperative relations between ASEAN and the nations of communist Indochina.[40]

A more robust Japanese military role would meet with even greater resistance in Northeast Asia. South Korea in particular retains an ill-concealed dislike and suspicion of Japan. Those suspicions are intensified by prospects of further retrenchment of U.S. forward-deployed forces in the Pacific. In October 1991 Korea's Ministry of Defense issued a White Paper which warned of Japan's growing military capabilites. More troubling than the forces themselves, said the report, was Japan's evident shift away from a narrowly defense-oriented posture.[41] Similarly concern about Japan's role in regional security arrangements remain a source of chronic anxiety among china's leaders and mass public.[42]

Given the broad resistance to overturning the Fukuda Doctrine that exists both within Japan and throughout much of Asia, a unilateral enhancement of Japan's regional military presence is most improbable. Should an expansion of its regional security role be undertaken at all, it will most likely occur through the modality of a small peacekeeping force deployed under United Nations auspices as advocated by Mr. Koji Kakizawa of the House of Representatives.

The third and final paradigm for and Asian-centric Japanese strategy envisions Japan as the hub of a regional economic grouping. Interestingly, debate on this issue among Japan's opinion leaders and policy elites has been framed by a call for an exclusive Asian e conomic bloc articulated by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir. Mahathir's proposed East Asian Economic Grouping (EAEG) would include the six nations of ASEAN plus Japan, South Korea, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Burma, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.[43]

Although endorsed by some opinion leaders, including most notably Dietman Koji Kakizawa,[44] most Japanese commentators and policymakers have been notably skittish about the concept. As the editors of the NIHON KEIZAI put it, "Prime Minister Mahathir seemingly is trying to bring the'North-South problem' into the Asia-Pacific region.[45] The observation is revealing, for it has been Japan that arguably has benefitted more than any other nation from the liberal international economic order embodied by GATT, an order that would be undermined by exclusionary economic blocs. Recognizing this, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been decidedly cool towards the Malaysian proposal [46] while the editors of Japan's leading business newspaper have openly worried that "if Japan's power of influence over Asia becomes stronger, there is the possibility that a newly formed North American bloc will increase its exclusive nature, "thus calling into doubt the GATT vision of a liberal, open internationaL order upon which Japan's postwar prosperity has depended.[47]

It is certain that Japan's search for a strategic vision will countinue to evaluate various calls by some opinion leaders for a greater regional focus whereby Japan would play a leadership role in the dynamic Asia-Pacific region. As the preceding discussion has shown, however, not only is the primacy of the Asia-centric paradigm in doubt among Japan's opinion elites but there are severe obstacles-- both conceptually and politically-- that Japan's Asia-firsters have yet to address successfully regarding the implementation of such a strategy.

2. The Bilateralists. Opposed to advocates of an Asia-centric strategy for Japan are those opinion leaders and policy elites who emphasize the continued centrality of the bilateral relationship with the United States. To them, the American connection is the **sine qua non** of Japan's contemporary international position and it is from this axiom that Japan's proper globoal strategy should be deduced.

Given the centrality of the United States to Japan for the past 45 years, it is scarcely surprising that many Japanese elites respond to specific foreign policy issues through the intellectual prism of the U.S.-Japan relationship. Interviews with numerous opinion leaders in Tokyo just weeks before Iraq invaded Kuwait underscored the importance that many opinion elites place on the maintenance of a sound partnership with the United States. This was true, for example, in media circles. Mr. Yoshio Murakami, foreign editor of the prestigious ASAHI SHIMBUN, argued that most Japanese realize that there is much to lose if Japan-American relations break down: "they want to go with the winning horse," as he put it.[48] Similarly, Mr. Mikio Haruna, deputy editor on the foreign desk of the Kyodo News Service, believes it is essential to keep the U.S. militarily engaged in Asia, less to curb the Russians than as a "guarantor of regional stability."[49]

A number of policy intellectuals voiced similar sentiments, including professors Nushi Yamamoto of Tokyo University, Tomohisa Sakanaka of Aoyama Gakuin University, and Shigekatsu Kondo of the National Institute for Defense Studies.[50] All stressed the need to maintain and strengthen the bilateral tie, both in security and economic links.

Officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Japan Defense Agency echoed the sentiment. For example, Mr. Toshinori Shigeie, then Director of the National Security Affairs Division in the Foreign Ministry, stated emphatically that "the U.S. must stay in the Pacific. Nobody can replace it. Japan must educate its people and support the U.S. and the basic structure in Asia, whose main pillar is the U.S. presence."[51]

Shigeie's sentiments were seconded by Jiro Hagi, Counsellor of the Japan Defense Agency, who stated flatly that "the U. S. presence is indispensable for peace and stability in Asia."[52]

Perhaps more than any other single opinion leader, it is Mr. Motoo Shiina who has stressed the centrality of the U.S. relationship longest and most consistently. For many years the LAP's acknowledged leader on security issues in the Diet, Mr. Shiina continues to promote his views as a private citizen. A central imperative for Japan, he argues, is to keep the U.S. engaged in the security of Asia, and to do that it "must help the U.S. feel comfortable staying in Japan."[53] In August 1990 Shiina urged a robust Japanese effort in the Gulf largely as a means of maintaining "the Japan-U.S. Security structure."[54] Shiina added that "if public opinion in the U.S. were to view that the Soviet Union, which they had thought to be an enemy until now, did more to help, it will be considerably troublesome. Japan ought to do as much as it can."[55]

Shiina's central premise was repeated in a November 1990 editorial in the daily NIHON KEIZAI. Entitled "Do Not Drive U.S. to Road of Isolationism," the paper's editors urged Japanese support of the U.S.-led effort out of fear that America might otherwise withdraw into isolationism.[56] From this premise of the criticality of America's continued engagement in the world and in Asian security especially, it follows that Japan must be closely attuned to American perceptions of Japanese cooperation. In August nad again in November 1990, the daily SANKEI reported on American "dissatisfaction 'with a Japan which does not bear risks'"[57] and noted its fear that "Japan's awkward or belated measures toward the Middle East crisis" could lead to a breakdown in U.S.-Japan relations.[58] Sharing this anxiety over American opinion were Yukio Okamoto, then with the Foreign Ministry, who feared that American mistrust of Japan's policy reluctance had created the most severe crisis in the bliateral relationship in years, [59] Mr. Masashi Nishihara of the National Defense Academy, who told reporters that "if I were an American, I would see Japan as not reliable as a friend."[60]

From these premises, it follows-- according to adherents of the bilateralist paradigm-- that Japan's responses to international crises must be framed with the requirements of the United States clearly in mind. Writing in the prestigious foreign affairs magazine, GAIKO FORUM, Foreign Ministry official Shigeo Takenaka framed the issus this way : "the policy which Japan ought to take must be a policy which will foster sound U.S. internationalism. It must be a policy which will give self-confidence to the American people that the United States can manage with internationalism, because there is the cooperation of Japan and other countries, even at a time like the present when the United States has fallen into financial difficulties."[61]

In a similar vein, former Ambassador to the U.S. Nuburo Matsunaga has argued that in the post-Cold War world marked by uncertainty and instability, it is more imperative than ever that the United States remain fully engaged in global affairs as an honest broker and a force for stability, democracy, and international economic openness. His call for Japan to do more to "share international resposibility" is explicitly linked to his fear that unless Japan does so, "the isolationist trend in the USA" will grow and bring with it a dangerous new degree of international uncertainty.[62] Likewise, the editors of SANKEI fretted about the apparent inward shift of American sentiment.[63]

Japan's bilateralists are challenged by two patterns that have recently become acute: (1) concern over whether the United States will be able to restore the domestic health needed for its global leadership, and (2) alarm over the evident deterioration of affection and goodwill between the U.S. and Japan.

As to the former, a 1991 study of U.S.-Japan relations commissioned by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and conducted by the International Institute for Global Peace (sometimes referred to as the "Nakasone Institute" after its founder, former Prime Minister Nakasone) concluded that

"it is apparent that the U.S. economy is not recovering and its capacity to manage its foreign strategy is declining-- for example, its inability to bear the full costs of the Gulf War. The American people and policymakers seem to refuse to acknowledge the country's decline and need for improvement. ... If the entire U.S. political system is not reformed, the illogical, inefficient budget procedure is likely to continue."[64] The unusually harsh words bore the stamp of the study's principal author, noted Tokyo University political scientist Seizaburo Sato. On another occasion, Sato told an interviewer that "there have always been ups and downs in the image of the United States in Japan. But there is a growing concern in Japan over the decline of American work ethics, moral principles, the quality of American products. Most Japanese realize that the world needs a strong, healthy, and economically dynamic United States, So all these trends are a source of concern."[65]

Doubts about America's capacity to get its domestic house in order have recently become pervasive in the Japanese media. For example, the editors of both the SANKEI and the TOKYO SHIMBUN have expressed the widespread alarm about America's precipitous decline and pessimism about its ability to restore its former strength, a strength which most Japanese policy elites believe to be a necessary pillar of the kind of stable world order which they believe is manifestly in Japan's interest.[66]

Mr. Naohiro Amaya, a former MITI senior official who now heads the Dentsu Research Institute, voiced the blunt conclusion that America "has lost its footing" and looks upon Japan as a convenient scapegoat for its own ills. In nearly the same breath, however, Amaya insists that U.S.-Japan cooperation is necessary to design the post-Cold War world. Similarly, the MAINICHI's editors worry that talk of a Japan-U.S. global pratnership will be rendered meaningless unless the U.S. successfully tackles the "illness of its own country's economy."[67]

The growing perception of a United States that has lost its economic vitality was captured vividly in public comments by two of Japan's principal leaders. In January 1992 Yoshio Sakurauchi, the Speaker of Japan's House of Representatives, asserted that America's economic problems are rooted in the fact that, as he put it, "U.S. workers are too lazy. They want high pay without working."[68] A powerful member of the LDP who has a long record of dealing with the U.S., Mr. Sakurauchi's comments appeared to reflect both Japanese frustration at beign blamed for America's economic problems and a genuine alarm that the pillar of postwar stability could crumble if it did not address its eroding industrial capabilities.

Less than two weeks later, no less a figure than Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa weighed in with the remark that America "may lack a work ethic."[69] Miyazawa, an ardent advocate of a Japanese-American global partnership, voiced the concerns of many of his fellow bilateralists that a crippled, self-indulgent United States will be unable to uphold its pillar in Japan's strategic vision of bilateralism.

A second source of concern for Japan's bilateralists is the apparent decline in respect and affection between the two nations. Numerous opinion polls reflect the hardening attitudes on both sides. For example, a survey of American opinion conducted in late 1990 showed that 60% polled consider that Japan's economic might will be a "critical threat" to the "vital interests of the U.S. over the next ten years."[70] A NIHON KEIZAI poll conducted in both the U.S. and Japan found that solid majorities in each country identified the other as the most important to its future, but that while 61% of Japanese "appreciate" America's role in the world, only 31% of Americans felt the same way about Japan. Interestingly, Japanese appeared to be much more pessemistic about the future of the bilateral tie, with only 10% believing that the two countries' relations will improve compared to 34% of Americans who expected to see the relationship get better.[71]

Perhaps Japanese pessimism arises from the findings of a MAINICHI SHIMBUN poll which

showed that over half of Japanese both regard American "Japan bashing" as unreasonable **and** expect it to get worse in the future.[72] Despite their disappointment at what they perceive as unreasonable American pressure on Japan, a resounding 69% of Japanese respondents believed that the Japan-U.S. alliance should be maintained as is, as against only 13% who wished to see it "weakened further."[73]

Americans may be startled to learn that resentment of U.S. criticisms of Japan has triggered a wave of counter-criticism of the U. S. Best captured by the word **"kenbei,"** a broadly critical Japanese dislike of the U.S. has surfaced in poll after poll.[74] Yet there is little to suggest that today's freely-expressed mutual frustration need presage a breakdown in the bilateral relationship. For example, a poll conducted in the fall of 1991 by the YOMIURI found that more Japanese (24%) indentified the U.S. as a potential security threat than any other country named, it remains the case that the U.S. also ranked number one as a "country which can be relied upon" (56%).[75]

Japan's bilateralists believe that the nation's well-being is bound up with its economic, security, and political ties with the U.S. It is perhaps inevitable that an affluent, self-confident Japan will find itself frequently at odds with the wounded collosus which defeated it in World War II, occupied and reformed it along American lines, and for the past four decades has served as its mentor and protector in a remarkably successful relationship. Transforming what Richard Holbrooke has recently termed "the unequal partnership" into a genuine global partnership of peers will surely be a complex and difficult process for both sides.[76] Japan's bilateralists are betting that transition can successfully be made.

The central question of Japan's contemporary strategic debate should priority be given to the regional affairs of Asia or to the bilateral partnership with the United States?-- remains unanswered. It will continue to generate broad debate and reflection among Japanese opinion leaders and policy elites. How this fundamental issue is resolved will be of immense significance for Japan, for Asia, for the United States, and for the emerging post-Cold War international system.

Footnotes

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18. "Post-Cold War and New Asia-Pacific Trend Roundtable Discussion," GAIKO FORUM, February 1991 (United States Embassy, Tokyo, "Summaries of Selected Japanese Magazines" [hereafter SSJM], June 1991). p. 11.

19. Yotaro Kobayashi, "Japan's Need for Re-Asianization," FORESIGHT (April 1991), cited in Funabashi, **op. cit.**

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21. Naoki Tananka, "Japan Takes A New Economic Look At Asia," JAPAN TIMES WEEKLY, April 22-28, 1991, p. 11.

22. **Ibid.**

23. **Ibid.**

24. "Sayonara, America," NEWSWEEK, August 19, 1991, p. 32.

25. **Ibid.**

26. **Ibid.**

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