

Rejecting the Military Path

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One often hears it said that it is senseless to support Japan's 1% - of - GNP cap on defense expenditure without considering what kind of military hardware can be provided within those limits. I agree that military capability should be part of any discussion of Japan's national security, but I would also point out that national security is not synonymous with military strength. We should be wary of those who approach the security question as if the only relevant issue were how much weaponry can be bought with 1% of gross national product or what percent of GNP is needed to acquire such - and - such an arsenal of weapons.

What is the motivation behind the current pressure to eliminate the 1% ceiling? I see it as an attempt to shift Japan's basic political and diplomatic stance. An effort is being made to reduce political and diplomatic issues to military dimensions and thus move the country toward militarism. The problem is in the way opponents of the ceiling have framed the 1% debate, not in the failure of supporters to consider the content of the defense set up.

In support of the 1% cap on military spending.

What we call national security or defense is, ultimately, a function of politics and diplomacy - and this is as it should be. The starting point

of any defense debate must be a consensus as to the country's political posture and international principles. Japan's posture and principles now appear to be undergoing fundamental change; here lies the heart of the current controversy over defense spending.

Domestically, we need to reexamine the significance of a national budget that for several years now has permitted huge increases in military spending while holding down outlays for education and welfare. This policy of boosting defense outlays over those of education and welfare represents not a military but a political decision. From the international perspective as well, the proposed removal of the 1% limit at this particular juncture — in the face of protests from other Asian countries and the Soviet Union — is tied to the highly political question of Japan's international stance. And yet no national consensus regarding a shift in stance has been established. The powers that be have chosen to ignore public opinion and pretend that the debate is really about the best arsenal of weapons, thereby pursuing what might be called an easy - payment militarization policy.

Moves to remilitarize Japan date back to the early postwar period. The national debate that began then pivoted on the choice between two paths, one leading toward rearmament and the other toward a peaceful and democratic society.

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Today, however, the issue is not simply militarization. It is whether Japan should become a major military power. In this sense, it is a debate not over military hardware but over the fundamental political principles upon which Japan operates.

Some say that Japan will not become a major military power just because the 1% ceiling has been exceeded. The first problem with this position is that the low 1% figure itself derives from Japan's method of calculating military expenditures, which differs from that used by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. When the NATO formula is applied, we find that Japan's military outlays already amount to between 1.5% and 2% of GNP. Today Japan ranks eighth in the world in military spending. As soon as outlays surpass 2% by the NATO definition, Japan will be neck and neck with Saudi Arabia in seventh place. And because Japan's GNP is so large, its total defense expenditures will soon approach those of Britain, France, and West Germany. Such a development would make a mockery of Japan's vow not to become a military power like Britain and France. However the Japanese themselves perceive their country's military might, in time Japan will achieve the capability of the largest West European countries in all but nuclear weapons.

What will happen if Japan decides to implement the basic shift embodied in the call for abolishment of the 1% barrier? First, a powerful brake against runaway defense spending will be eliminated. Second, force - breeds - counterforce dynamics will come to bear in Japanese - Soviet relations, drawing Japan even further into the U.S. - Soviet arms race. And though we are being told that military spending (by Japan's definition) will exceed 1% of GNP only slightly, there is no guarantee that the new level can be maintained once the buildup gains momentum. Even now, some people would have us devote as much as 1.5% or 2% of GNP to defense.

Before we accept such proposals, we must ask whether we really want Japan to embark on the road to becoming a major military power.

Beyond power politics

Another argument is that since Japan is an economic superpower, it is only natural that the country also become powerful militarily. The proponents of this view insist that for better or for worse it is a historical fact that countries powerful in the economic realm have always had to increase their military costs and capabilities to some extent. It follows that whether we consider national interests or international responsibilities, a heavier military burden is inevitable now that Japan is economically powerful.

I grant that economic powers in the past generally also became military powers, but the circumstances today do not permit the direct application of this historical generalization. Beginning late in the nineteenth century, countries that had economic ambitions were forced to acquire military might in large part because warfare was accepted behavior under the rules of the power game. Britain, France, and Germany went to war with one other and fought over colonies to bolster their own economic growth in the battle of imperialist powers. Now the imperialist powers are known as advanced industrial countries, and they are increasingly bound by relationships of interdependence. Warfare is no longer an accepted means of resolving economic disputes. Or perhaps I should say that war has become too costly.

Yesterday's economic powers became military powers also because this was the only way they could control their colonies and secure supplies of natural resources. Today, however, a policy of dominating developing countries by military force would be extremely costly. West European countries learned this lesson in the course of the colonial independence movements that followed World War II; the United

States learned the same lesson in Vietnam and is now learning it in Central America. From this perspective we can see the folly in the argument that Japan needs to be able to defend its sea lanes to secure supplies of natural resources.

Any country that now seeks economic superpower status must accept two responsibilities: that of economic liberalization and market opening and that of assistance to developing countries. In the past economic expansion was pursued through unilateral policies in which state and economic interests overlapped, and military might was used to back up these policies. But this pattern of development is no longer feasible.

Japan is a latecomer to the club of industrially advanced countries. Before World War II it was the sole modern imperialist state in Asia, and it brought calamity upon itself and other Asian countries by embarking on a course calculated to give it a place among the major imperialist powers. After the war, in accordance with its new Constitution, Japan determined to observe the principle of shunning military might while striving to become an economic power, thus parting ways with the senior members of the advanced industrial world. As I see it, this was a far-sighted choice that will eventually win much more international approval than it enjoys today.

But can Japan continue on this course now that the American hegemony is weakening? Those who say no claim that the relative decline of U.S. power means that Japan cannot rely complacently on the American military umbrella for protection from the Soviet Union. As early as the 1950s I predicted that this type of thinking would eventually come into vogue in Japan, for in those days many Americans were thinking along just these lines. As the cold war intensified in the late 1940s, Americans began to debate the necessity of an American military buildup to counter the Soviet threat. Those who favored such a buildup stated persuasively that the United

States had been able to follow an isolationist policy before World War II only because the Pax Britannica — particularly the umbrella of the British navy — had protected it. With the decline in British power, the argument went, the United States had no choice but to augment its own military strength. Such were the considerations underlying the power - politics thinking of the time.

Now the Japanese are hearing the same sort of argument: Japan has been able to follow a pacifist policy only because of the security provided by the Pax Americana. If the American military presence in the Far East is withdrawn, a Japanese military presence will be needed as a substitute. But whereas I had expected this line of reasoning to attract a wide following some time ago, in fact it has gained a hearing only in the last five or six years. How can this delay be explained?

As it happened, the Japanese were infected by what might be called the “realism of the nuclear age.” They came to believe that in such an age, unlike the era of American isolationism, the logic of power politics ceases to function. The commonsense notion took hold that as long as nuclear weapons exist, replacing the American umbrella with a Japanese one cannot guarantee Japan’s safety. This nuclear - age realism, forged in the crucible of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, is the basis of Japanese - style pacifism. It explains why the public has not clamored for greater defense spending each time the United States has pared down its military presence in the Far East. This outlook has also spurred conservatives and progressives alike to channel their energies into promoting Japan’s development as an economic power.

This point aside, the entire notion of the Pax Americana is built on the premise that peace and justice in the world cannot be realized unless America — or the Western bloc as a whole — is in a position of military superiority. As I shall

discuss later, we need to ask whether this premise is valid. In my opinion it is not, and this is another reason for opposing removal of the 1% spending cap.

Recently some Japanese have begun to voice the alarming opinion that Japan needs to assume more military responsibility not merely to share the burden of the Japan - U.S. alliance but also to promote the interests of the Japanese state. Taking a line that might be seen as a kind of pseudo-Gaullism, they say Japan should beef up its military regardless of whether the American hegemony weakens. Others, including Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro, add to this a power-politics view of the state and international relations. Such thinking embraces serious errors and should not be used to rationalize a military buildup.

In sum, we can say that two dubious world views lie behind current moves to abolish the 1% ceiling. The first is the outlook on international politics that reduces everything to a question of power. In this view, deterrence and a balance of power are, as Nakasone is fond of saying, the keys to peace. The second is the "evil empire" outlook of U.S. President Ronald Reagan. This is the theory that the Soviet Union is the source of all forces working to disrupt global peace and obstruct justice. Both philosophies must be called into question.

The risk of deterrence, the folly of Star Wars

The deterrence and balance - of - power theories deserve closer analysis. The notion that deterrence can guarantee peace is one that even President Reagan has begun to question. At his recent summit talks with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, for instance, Reagan warned that reliance on deterrence through offensive weapons is becoming increasingly dangerous. This was one argument he gave in support of his Strategic Defense Initiative.



The Star Wars scheme is based on the premise that a successful defense against nuclear weapons can be developed. This is in sharp contrast to the deterrence theory, which assumes that a perfect defense is impossible. If one country prepares to attack, deterrence advocates hold, the country under attack can cause the offensive to be abandoned by threatening a nuclear counter-strike capable of destroying the enemy.

Reagan is right in arguing that pursuit of the deterrence strategy leads to an increasingly dangerous situation not to a stable peace. But the conclusion he has drawn from this is the wrong one. Whatever he himself may say, the fact is that SDI weaponry will enhance the ability of its possessor to make a preemptive strike and thus will take arms escalation a step further. The only sane path is that of disarmament.



While the optimistic view that deterrence offers the best means of securing peace is thus losing ground in Washington, it still enjoys wide acceptance in Tōkyō. Perhaps this is because few Japanese have given serious thought to the risks of deterrence for a country possessing nuclear weapons. Whatever the case may be, Prime Minister Nakasone counts among the few heads of government that uncritically endorse the deterrence argument.

The balance - of - power theory also needs reconsideration. Whereas this concept holds that an equilibrium of forces is desirable, what we actually find when we review the postwar East - West confrontation is that the United States and the Western camp have consistently tried to establish and maintain military superiority. Some people proclaim forthrightly that peace and justice cannot be attained unless the West is stronger than the East; others stop short of this position and concede that a balance of power should be sufficient in theory but advocate action to ensure that the balance never shifts to the West's disadvantage.

Although some conclude simplistically that the U.S. lead over the Soviet Union is what has preserved peace, this lead has in fact played the foremost role in spurring the Soviet Union's military buildup by presenting what the Russians perceive as a threat to their security. Now, moreover, we stand at a critical threshold. In the 1970s Soviet power reached the point where even the Russians acknowledged that they had more or less achieved parity with the Americans, whereupon they began to negotiate seriously for arms control in such forums as the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. Now, judging that rough parity has been attained even in terms of nuclear weapons, they are strenuously objecting to the SDI scheme on the grounds that it will upset the nuclear balance. Having struggled for three decades after World War II to catch up, they are afraid Star Wars will touch off a new arms race lasting into the twenty - first century.

Once this race begins, both sides will have to bear a heavy burden. And in the end nothing will be resolved. The history of the arms race teaches us that every time the United States pulls ahead, the Soviet Union makes whatever sacrifice is needed to catch up. Gorbachev has already indicated that his country is prepared to put weapons on space bases to counter the SDI defense.

The West now stands at a crossroads. Should it run the new race for 20 or 30 years until Soviet capabilities match its own, and then perhaps start yet another race? Or should it take the opportunity provided by the current rough military parity to embark on disarmament in earnest?

Blockading the straits around Japan

People are saying that we must assume a " fair share " of the Japan - U.S. partnership. In terms of military capabilities, one of the implications is that Japan should be able to blockade the straits leading from the Sea of Japan to the Pacific. Since there would be no point in closing off the straits after Soviet vessels had left their

ports and entered the Pacific, obviously the blockade would have to be put in place quickly. If, for example, a crisis were brewing in the Middle East and both the United States and the Soviet Union were preparing for war, Japan would have to initiate a blockade even though actual fighting had not yet begun. Soviet vessels could not be allowed to pass through on the grounds that war might still be averted, for that would rob the blockade of its effectiveness.

The Soviet military would not accept this situation without a fight. To secure passage to the Pacific, it would attack any vessels in the way and possibly the land bordering the straits. It might also launch strikes against hostile bases of the Self - Defense Forces as well as key installations in Japan's communications network. To that extent Japan would be unable to avoid involvement in war.

Two scenarios deserve consideration. One is that intensive negotiations between Washington and Moscow would manage to head off full - scale fighting, defusing the crisis in the Middle East. Since the Soviets could be expected to limit themselves to conventional weapons in battling the SDF, the conflict would stop short of total war; Japan alone would suffer a pummeling, and no nuclear arms would be used. The prevention of a world war would be a fine conclusion, of course, but Japan would have been transformed into a battlefield for no reason. And yet this is precisely what Washington expects of Tōkyō as part of its fair share of the Japan - U.S. alliance.

In the other scenario America's Far Eastern military forces join the SDF in the blockade, raising the risk of a local nuclear war as both sides prepare to fire tactical weapons at each other. At that point Moscow would have to choose between accepting the confinement of its naval vessels or forcibly securing access to the Pacific. Military considerations would no doubt lead to the latter option, and the region around Japan

would suffer a nuclear holocaust even without the outbreak of war in the Middle East.

In accepting the fair - share argument, in short, Japan runs the risk not merely of being dragged into a conflict that originated elsewhere but of triggering a war. Such fighting, moreover, could well escalate into a nuclear exchange that would envelop the world. Since a blockading capability is a key element of the role Washington plans for Japan, we must be prepared to accept the consequences if we accede to U.S. military demands.

Japan is now purchasing 100 American P-3G antisubmarine planes in an effort to improve its ability to detect and destroy Soviet submarines. Although the government claims that this mission is consistent with Japan's "exclusively defensive" posture, it is if anything an indication of the advanced level of military cooperation between Tōkyō and Washington. As I have long stressed, the Japanese military has gone further than any other organ of government toward linkage with the United States.

From the Soviet perspective, Tōkyō's protestations of exclusively defensive intentions border on nonsense given the unified setup of the Japanese and American armed forces. It must be recalled, for instance, that whenever Japan tightens up its so - called defense, it is also providing better protection to the American military bases in Japan, bases that possess offensive capabilities. We must be realistic enough to appreciate that no one takes seriously the assertion that the SDF, which are clearly designed to support America's awesome might and provide a crucial link in U.S. strategy, are an independent military force with an exclusively defensive mission.

For argument's sake let us agree that the SDF should be judged only on the basis of their own power. Even in that case, can we really say that this power is exclusively defensive? When antisubmarine weapons have been introduced, they can be used for either defense or attack



Emperor Hirohito visited Yasukuni Shrine

and will thus threaten Soviet submarines in the Sea of Japan with sudden detection and destruction. The argument that this is a purely defensive capability is dubious from any objective viewpoint, and it probably looks like an outright lie from the Soviet viewpoint. There is a fairly clear dividing line between offensive and defensive capabilities, but it is inevitably blurred when the logic of deterrence is permitted to guide our thinking.

A breakthrough in relations with the Soviets

The Japanese government's record of political efforts to resolve conflicts and ease tensions in the Asia - Pacific region is hardly impressive. At the level of bilateral diplomacy, the foremost stumbling block is the strained relationship with the Soviet Union. Japan should do two things to achieve a breakthrough here. One is to stop insisting that a resolution of the dispute over

the Soviet - occupied islands northeast of Hokkaidō precede everything else.

I myself regard the Soviet occupation of these so - called northern territories as unreasonable, but I am not as convinced as many Japanese of the international validity of the arguments the government has put forward to demand their return. One problem is that Japan relinquished all rights to the Kurile Islands — and two of the northern territories certainly seem to be part of this chain — in the San Francisco peace treaty after World War II. Nowhere in the treaty is there any mention of Japan's claim that these two islands actually constitute the “ Southern Kuriles ” and that therefore they are not covered by the clause relinquishing the Kuriles.

Since the Soviet Union was not a signatory to the San Francisco treaty, it may be true that Japan never handed the Kuriles over to the Soviet Union and that therefore the Soviets have no right to claim the islands as their own. But that the islands are not Soviet does not of itself mean

that they are Japanese; that the Soviet claims to the islands are flawed does not mean that the Japanese claims are unassailable. Without going into technical details, let me simply say that the arguments on both sides are problematic. This being so, Japan should be willing to ease its position that this issue must be resolved before talks on any other bilateral issue can commence.

The other step the government should take in its Soviet policy is to make political use of Japan's economic might. During the energy crisis of the 1970s the Japanese waxed quite enthusiastic about participating in development of the Siberian region, but interest cooled rapidly when the crisis passed and the economic incentives for participation diminished. A political factor was Japan's desire to maintain good relations with China at a time when the Sino - Soviet split was still sharp, but this should not be a major constraint now that Beijing and Moscow are talking to each other again. Nor should we let the anti - Soviet economic sanctions imposed at the time of the Afghanistan invasion stand in our way, for even Washington has switched course and opened the door for Soviet - bound grain exports.

The key to a breakthrough is economic cooperation not for the economic benefits involved but as part of a larger effort to improve the political situation. If an economic power like Japan is to contribute to the relaxation of East - West tensions, it must use its economic might in such a way as to reap maximum gains within the larger scheme of things even if it means incurring economic losses. This strategy is all the more important now that Soviet society is relaxing somewhat.

Options for the Asia - Pacific region

What are Japan's options in the field of multilateral diplomacy in the Asia - Pacific region? Let me discuss briefly the Korean Peninsula, Indochina, and the South Pacific.

To date the Japanese government has con-

tributed next to nothing to relaxation of tensions on the Korean Peninsula. Relations between North and South Korea have tended to be of the stop - and - go sort, but since people on both sides are demanding eventual reunification, their governments have been compelled to keep the lines of communication open. China has been playing a very constructive role. While maintaining a low profile, it has served as a valuable stabilizing force in Asia, acting as a conduit from North Korea to the United States and thus facilitating indirect communication between the two Koreas.

Japan, by contrast, is becoming a destabilizing force. Its economic advances into countries in the region have the potential of generating powerful anti - Japanese sentiment, and its moves to abolish the 1% ceiling on military spending and to sanction official visits by ministers of state to Yasukuni Shrine — which is linked to the prewar militarism and which includes war criminals among the war dead to which it is dedicated — are exacerbating political discord with numerous Asian countries. Such developments demonstrate that Japan has not adopted a course capable of smoothing relations in the Asian region; it is high time it took a different tack.

The situation does not demand unilateral initiatives by Japan. With China doing its best to promote stability on the Korean Peninsula from a nonaligned position — and at the same time trying to patch up the Sino - Soviet split — the relations between the two Koreas have already improved considerably. Of special note is a new law in North Korea permitting joint ventures with foreign companies; this presents a good opportunity for Japan to play a more supportive role. That the Japanese government could make a contribution by initiating large - scale economic cooperation with North Korea should be obvious. And as I have already noted, this aid should be designed from a broad perspective that goes beyond commercial considerations.

Indochina is another troubled area. Work-

ing to Japan's advantage are the relatively independent channels of communication it maintained with Vietnam in a rare departure from U.S. policy. After the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, however, Japan forfeited the chance to help calm the Indochinese situation when it aligned itself with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and against Vietnam.

At this point Japan should adopt a three-pronged policy. First, by stepping up economic assistance to Vietnam and promoting self-reliant economic development there, it should help wean the Vietnamese from excessive dependence on the Soviet Union. Second, it should support the disarmament of the Pol Pot faction as a condition for the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia, at the same time proposing free elections in Cambodia to be carried out under the surveillance of the United Nations. Third, it should set the longterm objective of assisting Cambodia's self-reliant economic growth free from Vietnamese influence, applying generous economic and technical aid to this end.

The outside support still being extended to the rebels in the Pol Pot faction is forcing the Phnom Penh government into a position of dependence on Vietnam, frustrating the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops, and sustaining the tension between Vietnam and ASEAN. Now, however, events are moving toward a resolution of the deadlock, and Japan is in an excellent position to render assistance. One significant development is the opening of communications between Vietnam and the United States for the purpose of ascertaining the fate of American soldiers listed as missing in action. We should not assume that enmity between Washington and Hanoi will last forever.

The ASEAN member states are gradually stepping up exchange with the Soviet Union and China. Japan is well situated to serve as an intermediary here, just as China is doing for the two Koreas, by standing between Vietnam and

ASEAN on the one hand and between Vietnam and China on the other. The Korean Peninsula and Indochina are at present the only areas of overt military tension in the East Asian region, and in both areas favorable developments have begun. We should not let this opportunity pass. The time has come for Japan to assume a leading role in easing tension by helping resolve local conflicts.

The South Pacific in another promising arena for action. Japan should join forces with those countries trying to make this sector a nuclear-free zone, thus aiding efforts to promote nuclear disarmament throughout the Asia-Pacific region. The South Pacific countries are by no means unified in their policies. Some, such as Australia, are closely tied to the United States; others, such as New Zealand, are rethinking their role in the American military alliance; yet others, such as tiny Vanuatu, are strongly asserting their independence. Overall, however, the countries of this region tend to place great importance on ridding the area of nuclear weapons both as a means of ensuring their autonomy and as a way of asserting their own identity.

Toward a purely defensive defense

The countries of the Asia-Pacific region span the political spectrum. On one side are Japan, South Korea, Australia, and other U.S. allies; on the other are North Korea and Vietnam, which have lined up with the Soviets; and in between can be found New Zealand, China, and many other states. I do not advocate that Japan urge those countries allied with America or Russia to abrogate their defense treaties, but I do think Japan should call on them to behave more independently in smoothing over strained regional relations and working for the reduction and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons.

In addition to adopting policies to play down military ties, the countries of the Asia-Pacific region should join in a forum for disarmament. Japan should take the initiative in the

establishment of this forum, for no one would question the motives of the country that experienced the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The forum would reduce friction growing out of Japanese economic advances and help dispel doubts over whether Japan seeks to become a military superpower, thus helping forge friendlier ties with countries in the region.

The way U.S. - Soviet negotiations are progressing at present, chances are the European region will take precedence over the Asia - Pacific region in any arms reduction program. While this is regrettable, we need not leave the entire issue to the American and Russian giants. When it comes to resolving local conflicts and promoting local disarmament, the countries of the region should take the initiative, bringing pressure to bear on Washington and Moscow. From this perspective as well Japan has been remiss.

Until now Japan has directed all its attention to developments in U.S. - Soviet relations and failed to take independent steps to settle conflicts in its own vicinity. In this sense it cannot escape criticism for shirking its responsibility as a member of the international community. This responsibility differs from the burden Japan has tried thus far to assume — that of a local proxy propping up the weakening U.S. hegemony. With the Soviet hegemony also in decline, Japan's true responsibility to international society is to join forces with nonaligned countries in an attempt to build a new world order.

A new defense setup will be needed to guarantee Japan's security in the new world order. The subject is a complex one, but I would like to address it briefly. We should begin with two premises: first, that there is no such thing as a perfect defense system, and second, that the strategy of deterrence cannot bring stability. Once these two points have been accepted, we must build what I call a "purely defensive defense." By

this I mean a security system that both the Japanese themselves and other nations can see lacks the ability to be turned to offensive ends.

The defense setup I have in mind would rest on two pillars. One is an organizational setup that guarantees the employment of military power only for defensive purposes and that ties Japan's defense forces to the peace - keeping system of the United Nations. In proposing to link the Japanese and U.N. peace - keeping systems, I am suggesting that we search for new arrangements suited to a world in which independent decision making in military affairs, the common rule of the past, is no longer realistic.

The objection may be raised that such a setup would infringe on Japan's sovereign rights, but as a result of the Japan - U.S. security arrangements, even today Japan does not possess so - called military sovereignty. Some would have us believe that the U.S. armed forces are essentially serving Japan as mercenaries, defending us in exchange for the money we make available to cover military costs and to fund foreign aid programs, but the fact is that America is the boss as far as military decisions go. The classical right of military sovereignty no longer pertains. We need to come up with new arrangements consistent with a peaceful world order.

The other pillar of the defense setup I propose is the principle that the hardware of the defense forces be limited to equipment incapable of offensive use. No weapon should be able to reach foreign soil. Only if Japan were attacked would it fight. We must aim for a defense system that would guarantee losses for any power attacking Japan -- military losses in the course of the attack and political losses resulting from Japan's destruction or occupation. People in European countries have been engaging in extensive research and discussion on such a purely defensive setup. Now is the time for the Japanese to join in the pursuit of this ideal.